竹光侍

His sword must be bamboo!

たけみつざむらい

四

松本大洋【作】永福一成

BIG SPIRITS COMICS SPECIAL

竹光侍

His sword must be bamboo!

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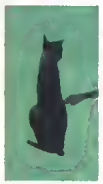

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His sword must be bamboo!

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TAKEMITSU ZAMURAI

ART BY
MATSUMOTO TAIYOU
STORY BY
EIFUKU ISSEI

BIG SPIRITS COMICS SPECIAL

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BAMBOO SAMURAI

竹光侍

His sword must be bamboo!

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四

【作】松本大洋
永福一成
【画】保坂孝幸

BIG SPIRITS COMICS SPECIAL

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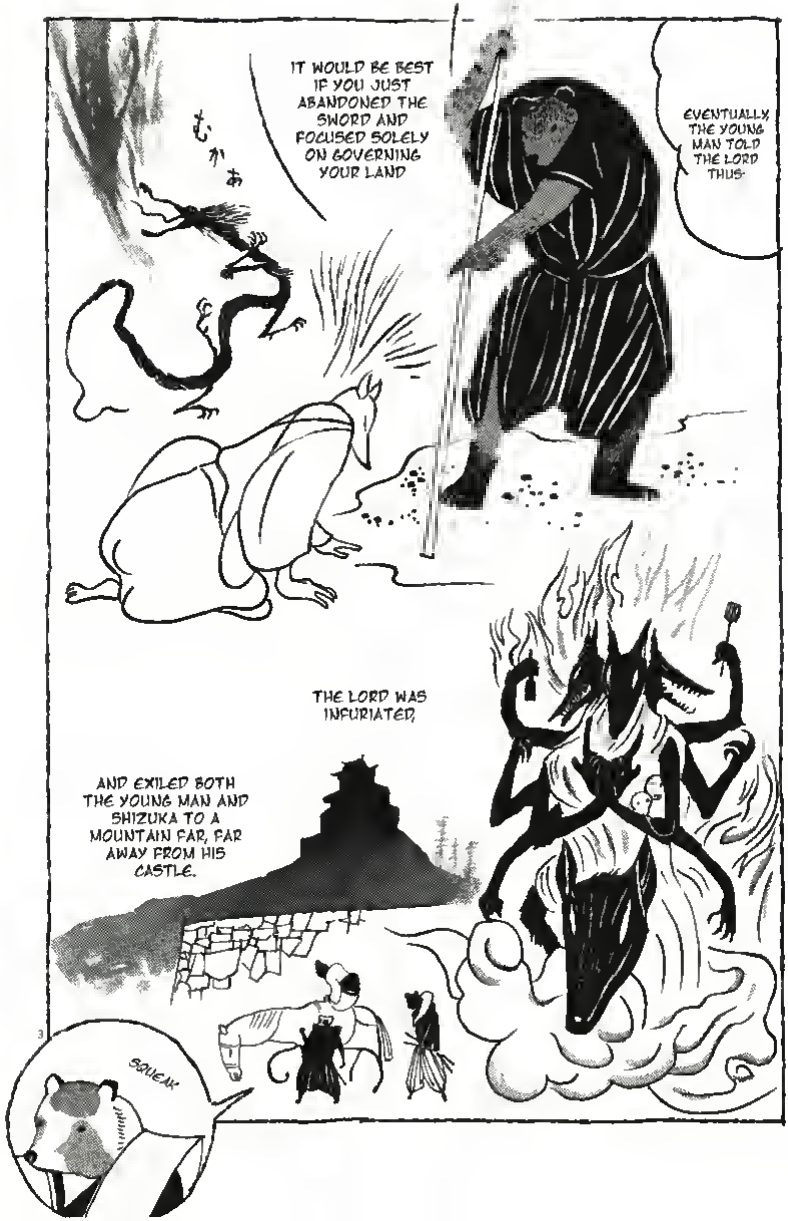
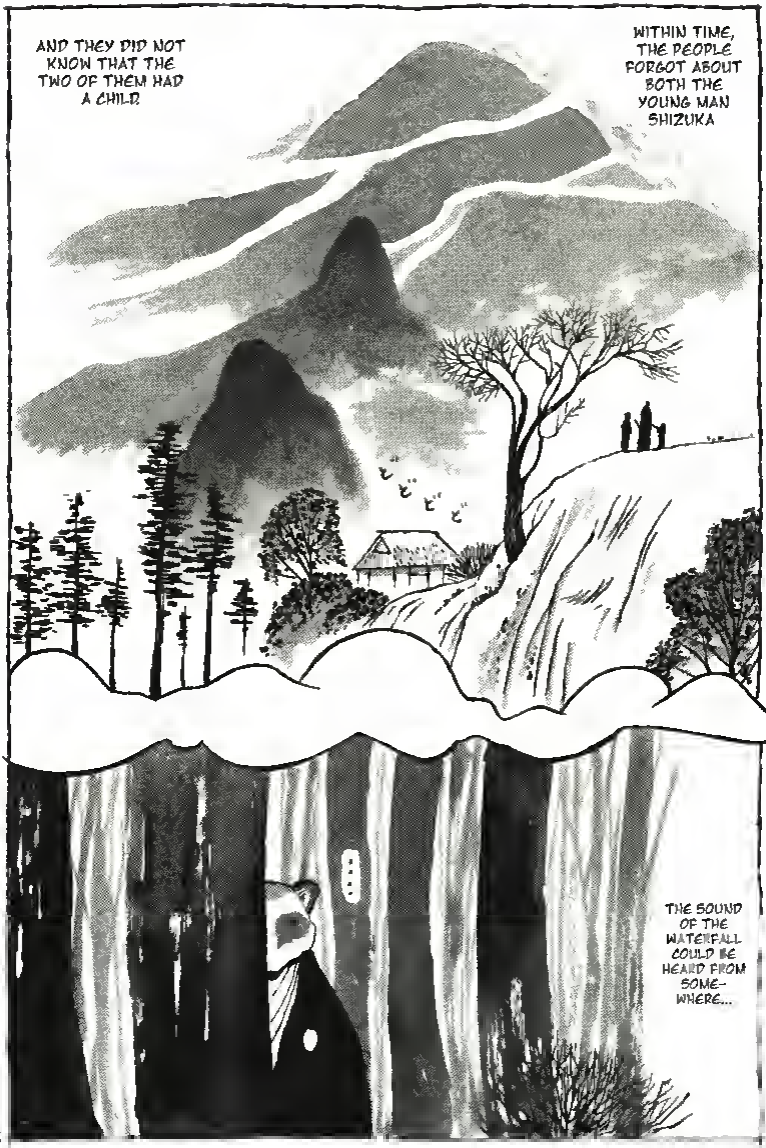
LONG LONG AGO, IN A CERTAIN PLACE, THERE WAS A LORD SKILLED WITH THE SWORD.
HIS RETAINERS PRAISED HIM HIGHLY AND THUS THE LORD TRAINED EVEN HARDER.
SPLENDID, SIR!
MAGNIFICENT SIR!

CHAPTER 31: TATEISHI

I SHALL GIVE YOU A BEAUTIFUL WIFE IF YOU WILL COME AND TEACH ME THE ART OF SWORDSMANSHIP
BUT NONE OF THE LORD'S RETAINERS WERE A MATCH FOR HIM, AND SO THEY SOUGHT A YOUNG SWORDSMAN SAID TO BE STRONGEST IN THE VILLAGE.
YES SIR.
YES, YOU MAY WED HER IF YOU WISH
SUCH A BEAUTY!
I AM CALLED SHIZUKA.
UGH!
BUT THE YOUNG MAN KNEW NOT OF FLATTERY AND BEAT THE LORD MERCILESSLY IN A SPAR.


EVENTUALLY, THE YOUNG MAN TOLD THE LORD THUS:
IT WOULD BE BEST IF YOU JUST ABANDONED THE SWORD AND FOCUSED SOLELY ON GOVERNING YOUR LAND
むかあ
THE LORD WAS INFURIATED,
AND EXILED BOTH THE YOUNG MAN AND SHIZUKA TO A MOUNTAIN FAR, FAR AWAY FROM HIS CASTLE.
SQUEAK


AND THEY DID NOT KNOW THAT THE TWO OF THEM HAD A CHILD.
WITHIN TIME, THE PEOPLE FORGOT ABOUT BOTH THE YOUNG MAN SHIZUKA
...
THE SOUND OF THE WATERFALL COULD BE HEARD FROM SOME-WHERE...

CHAPTER 31 TATEISHI

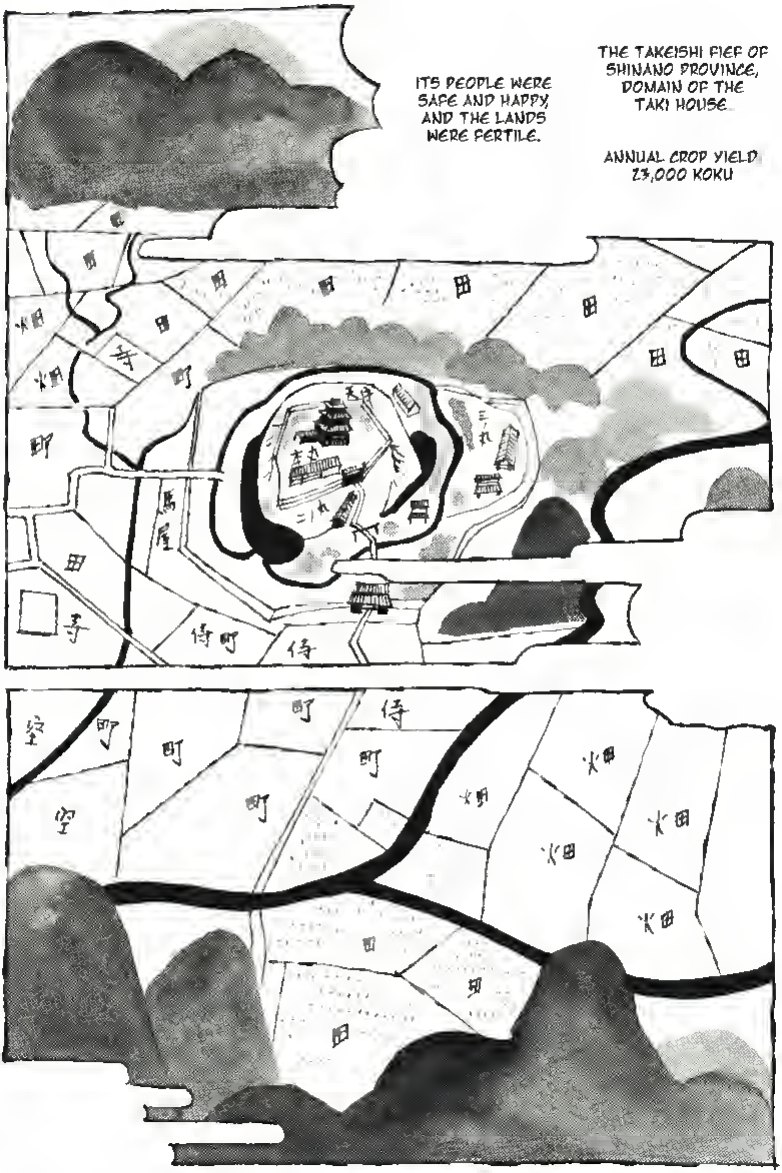
BZZ
BZZ
BZZ
BZZ
HA
HA
TROD

SIR, THE DOCTOR WILL BE VISITING THE LORD IN HALF A HOUR SO...
YES, I SHALL BE GOING THEN
ALSO, A MESSENGER FROM EDO ARRIVED AWHILE AGO...
.....
HE REPORTED THAT KIKUCHI SHINNOSUKE HAD BEEN ARRESTED
NGHH...

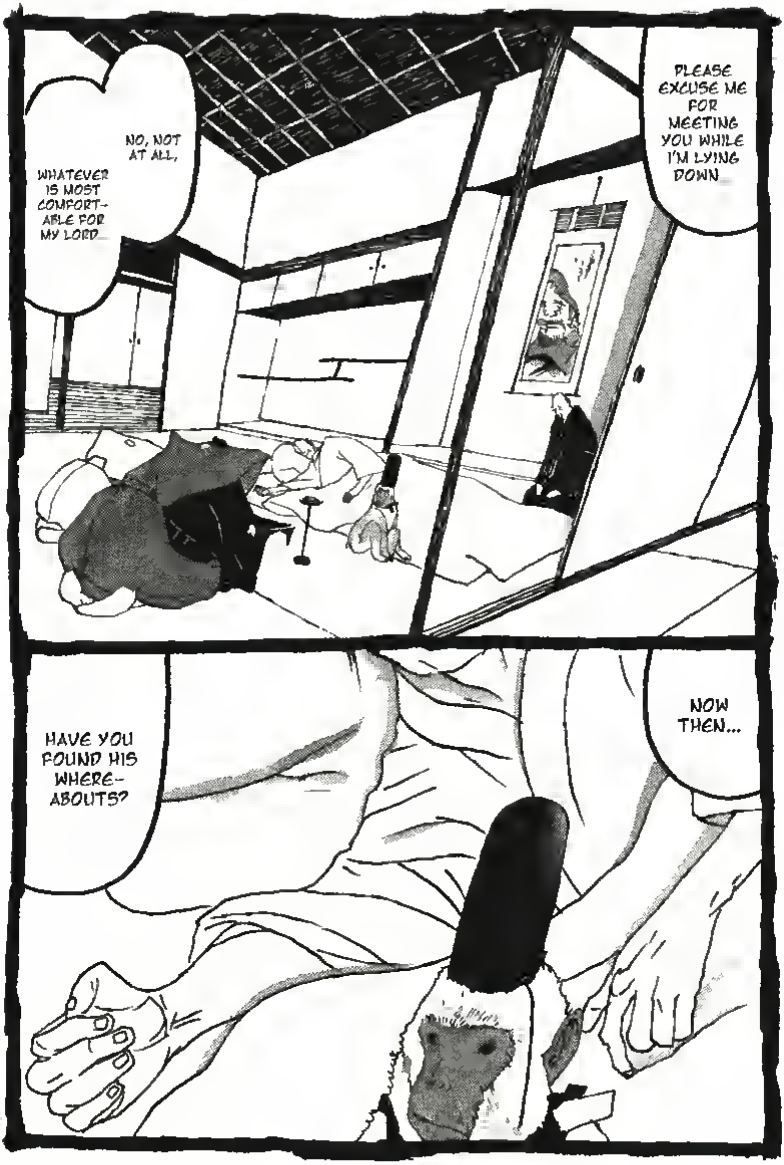
*KAROU: THE HIGHEST RANKING SAMURAI SERVING A LORD (DAIMYO); OMURASAKI IS THUS THE 2ND HIGHEST RANKING SAMURAI OF TAKEISHI

STEP
STEP
STEP
YES, HELLO TO YOU TOO.
GOOD DAY.
STEP
!
HEAD KAROU,
TAKEBE HYOUBUNOSUKE.
STEP
DO YOU KNOW THE MEANING OF "KEIKYOU-MOUDOU OMURASAKI?

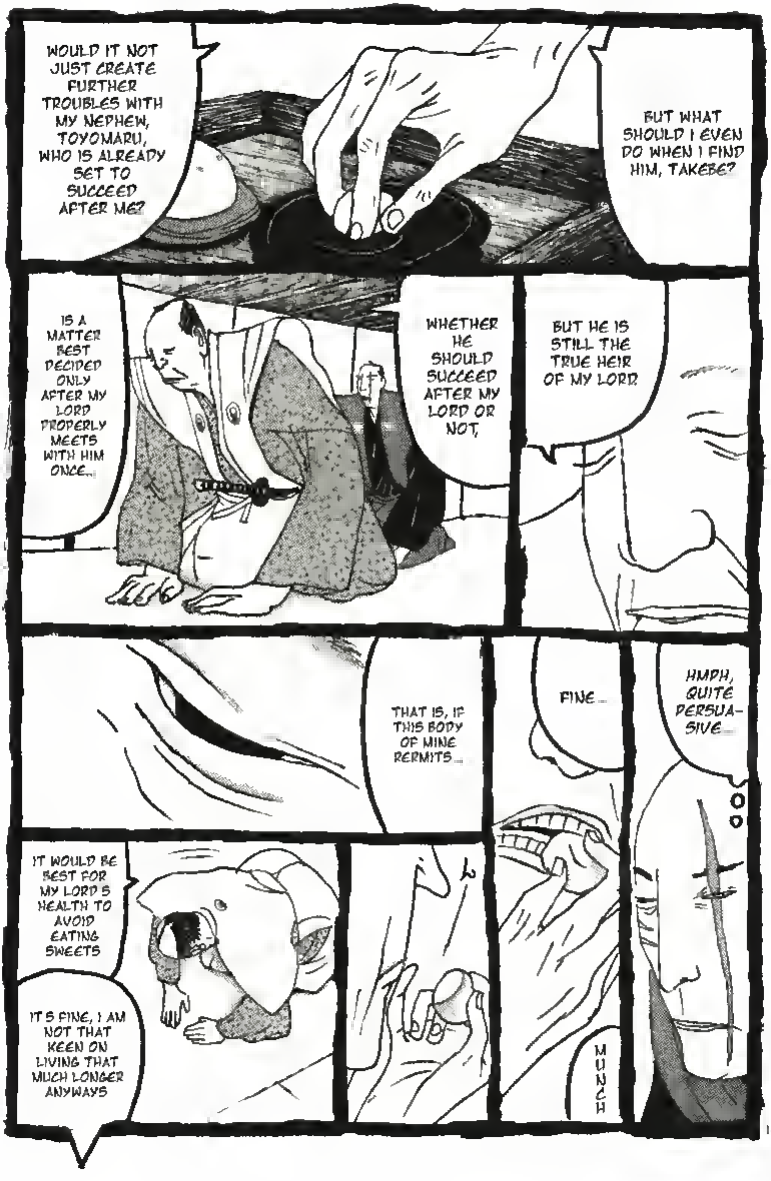
IT IS WHEN A MAN ACTS RASHLY AND MAKES A SITUATION EVEN WORSE.
HMPH ...
LIKE A CUCKOLDED FOOL. IN OTHER WORDS...
YES, SIR...
YOU TWO, STAND AND WAIT OUT HERE.



*田(field) 町(town) 寺(temple) 本丸(inner citadel) 二ノ丸 and 三ノ丸 (outer citadels) 馬屋(stable) 天守(castle keep) 空(empty) 侍(samurai)


PLEASE EXCUSE ME FOR MEETING YOU WHILE I'M LYING DOWN...
NO, NOT AT ALL, WHATEVER IS MOST COMFORT-ABLE FOR MY LORD...
NOW THEN...
HAVE YOU FOUND HIS WHERE-ABOUTS?

!
BUT I HAVE HEARD THAT OMURASAKI HERE SET OUT EVEN EARLIER THAN I TO FIND HIM.
THE MEN ARE CURRENTLY SEARCHING OVER ALL THE RESIDENCES IN EDO, BUT WE HAVE UNFORTUNATELY YET TO FIND HIS EXACT WHEREABOUTS, MY LORD
IS THAT TRUE JUUZOU?
I ONLY WISHED TO DELIVER MY LORD THE GOOD NEWS AS FAST AS POSSIBLE BUT I'M AFRAID I HAVE ALSO NOT YET FOUND HIM.
FORGIVE ME, MY LORD
I SEE.


WOULD IT NOT JUST CREATE FURTHER TROUBLES WITH MY NEPHEW, TOYOMARU, WHO IS ALREADY SET TO SUCCEED AFTER ME?
BUT WHAT SHOULD I EVEN DO WHEN I FIND HIM, TAKEBE?
IS A MATTER BEST DECIDED ONLY AFTER MY LORD PROPERLY MEETS WITH HIM ONCE...
WHETHER HE SHOULD SUCCEED AFTER MY LORD OR NOT,
BUT HE IS STILL THE TRUE HEIR OF MY LORD
THAT IS, IF THIS BODY OF MINE PERMITS...
FINE...
HMPH, QUITE PERSUA-SIVE...
IT WOULD BE BEST FOR MY LORD'S HEALTH TO AVOID EATING SWEETS
IT'S FINE, I AM NOT THAT KEEN ON LIVING THAT MUCH LONGER ANYWAYS
MUNCH

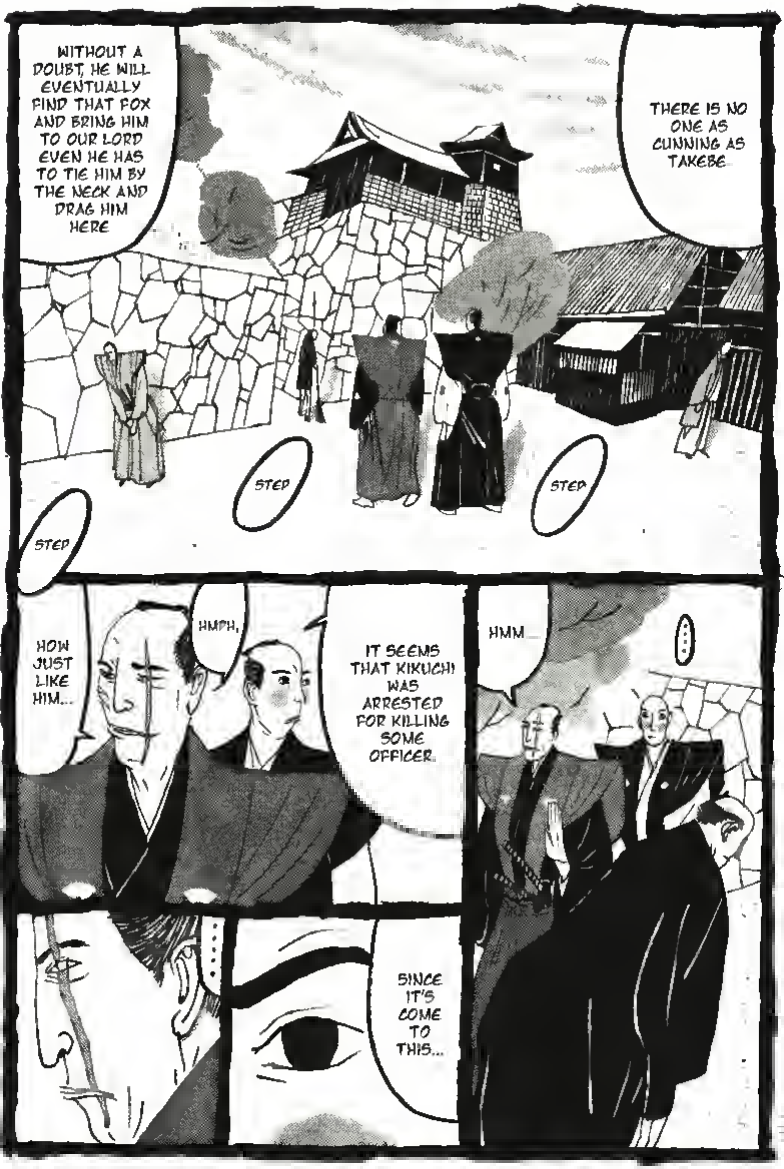
THE SCENT OF WINTER SEEMS TO BE IN THE AIR
I WONDER HOW MANY MORE WINTERS I WILL BE ABLE TO SEE...?
HE'S LOST A LOT OF WEIGHT
O。

THE CLOUDS SEEM TO BE MOVING A LITTLE STRANGELY...
WHAT'S WRONG SOU?
IT SEEMS TO TELL ME THAT SUMMER HAS NOW PASSED ON BY...

*EBOSHI IS A BLACK HAT WORN BY THE COURT NOBLES OF ANCIENT JAPAN, AND THE ENTIRE PHRASE HAS THE SAME MEANING AS "PEARLS BEFORE SWINE"

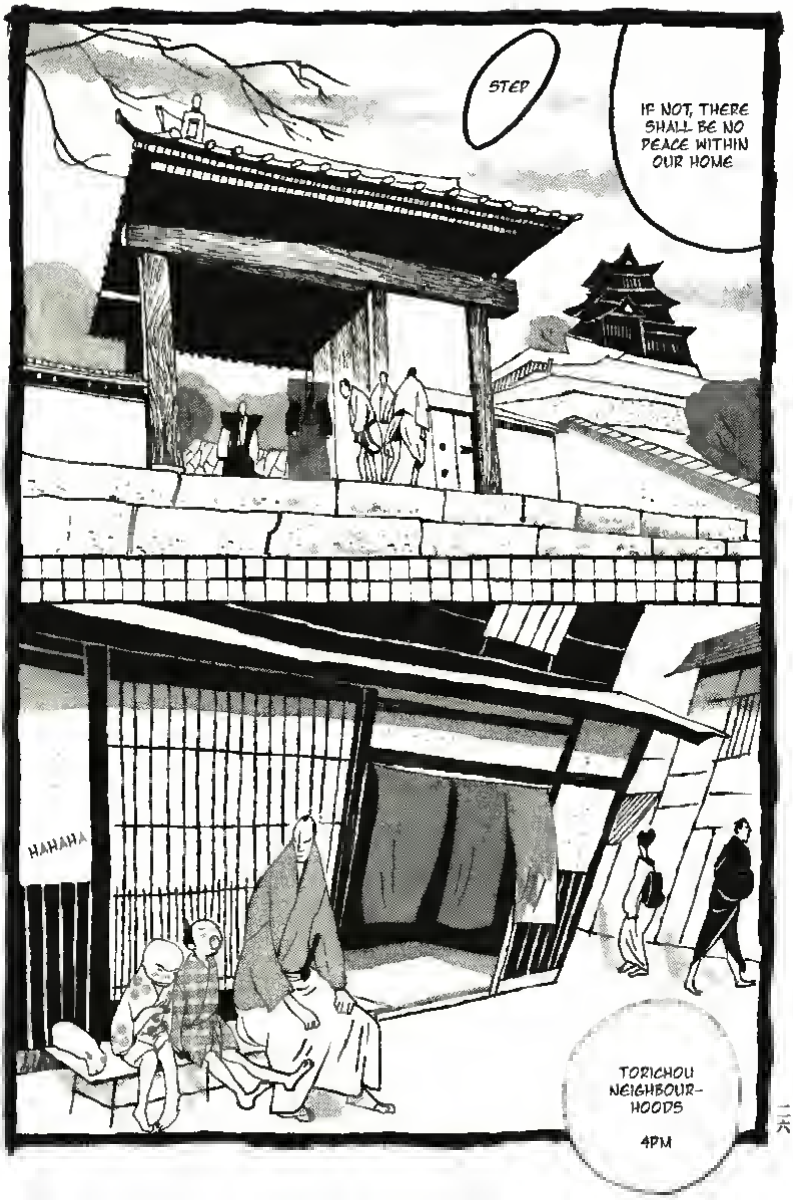
I SEE...
STEP
"IF THIS BODY OF MINE PERMITS..."
STEP
STEP
HE OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD NOT SAY SUCH THINGS...
STEP
AFTER ALL, THE LORD'S NEPHEW, TOYOMARU, HAS BEEN RECENTLY SETTLED AS HIS NEXT HEIR.
THEN, WHY NOT JUST LEAVE THAT FOX OF EDO ALONE?
NO.
HE MOST LIKELY WON'T BE ABLE TO MAKE HIS NEXT VISIT TO EDO."
QUITE BAD
HOW IS OUR LORD'S CONDITION?

*UNDER A SYSTEM CALLED SANKIN KOTAI, EACH LORD (DAIMYO) WAS REQUIRED TO SPEND 6MONTHS IN EDO.


WITHOUT A DOUBT, HE WILL EVENTUALLY FIND THAT FOX AND BRING HIM TO OUR LORD EVEN HE HAS TO TIE HIM BY THE NECK AND DRAG HIM HERE
THERE IS NO ONE AS CUNNING AS TAKEBE
STEP
STEP
STEP
HOW JUST LIKE HIM...
HMPH,
IT SEEMS THAT KIKUCHI WAS ARRESTED FOR KILLING SOME OFFICER.
HMM...
SINCE IT'S COME TO THIS...

NO, YOU MAY NOT.
MNN
ALLOW ME TO GO AND TAKE THE HEAD OF THAT FOX, SIR.
CLINK
DON'T SAY ANYMORE, MORI.
BUT SIR...
I KNOW YOU'RE CONFIDENT WITH YOUR SKILL WITH THE SWORD
IN FACT, YOU'RE QUITE DEPENDABLE.
T-THANK YOU, BUT SIR IF...
BUT YOU ARE NO MATCH FOR THAT FOX.
A MERE HUMAN CANNOT CUT HIM DOWN.
A MERE HUMAN...?
STEP
YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND BECAUSE YOU HAVE NOT SEEN WHAT THESE EYES OF MINE HAVE.
STEP
HE IS A BEAST.

STEP
AND HE ISN'T SOMEONE THAT TAKEBE WILL BE ABLE TO CONTROL
STEP
WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO GET RID OF THE FOX.
STEP
STEP


STEP
IF NOT, THERE SHALL BE NO PEACE WITHIN OUR HOME
HAHAHA
TORICHOU NEIGHBOUR-HOODS
4PM

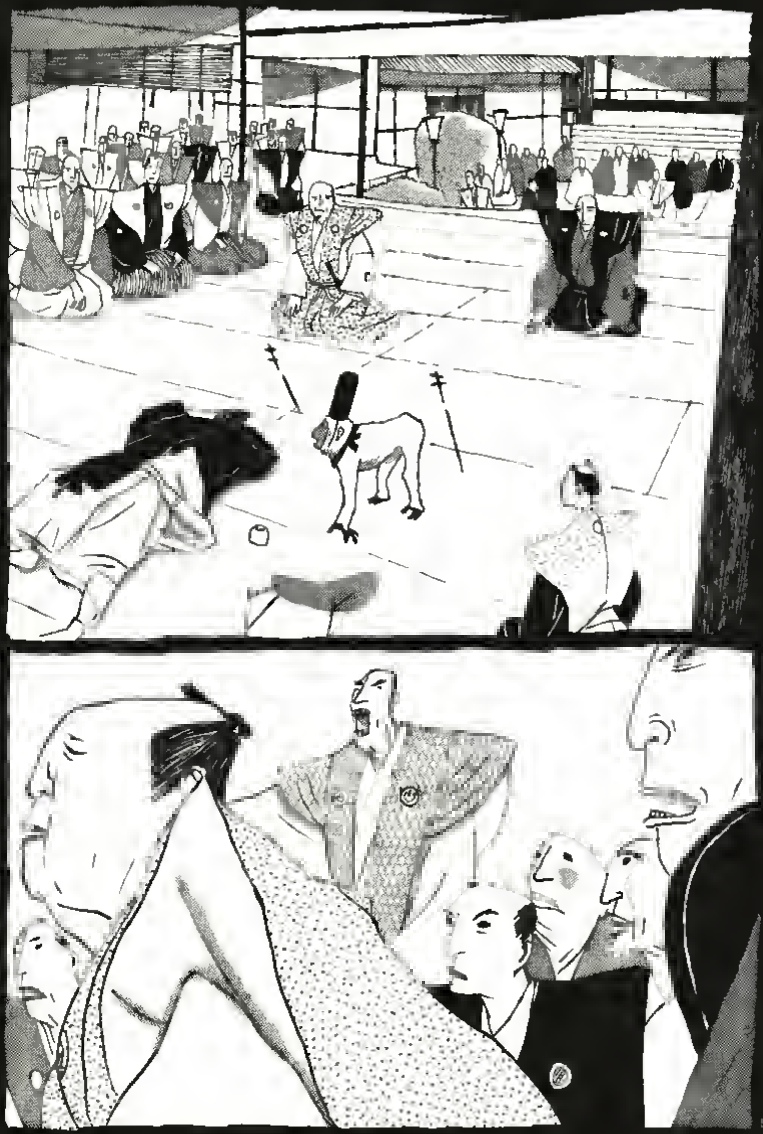
SHINANO PROVINCE, TAKEISHI
AGHH, DAMN BUGS...
UGH...
3.5 LI AWAY FROM THE CASTLE
DOES SIR COME HERE FROM TIME TO TIME?
NO...
I HAVEN'T BEEN HERE SINCE BACK THEN...
IT MUST'VE BEEN 3 YEARS ALREADY...

CHAPTER 32

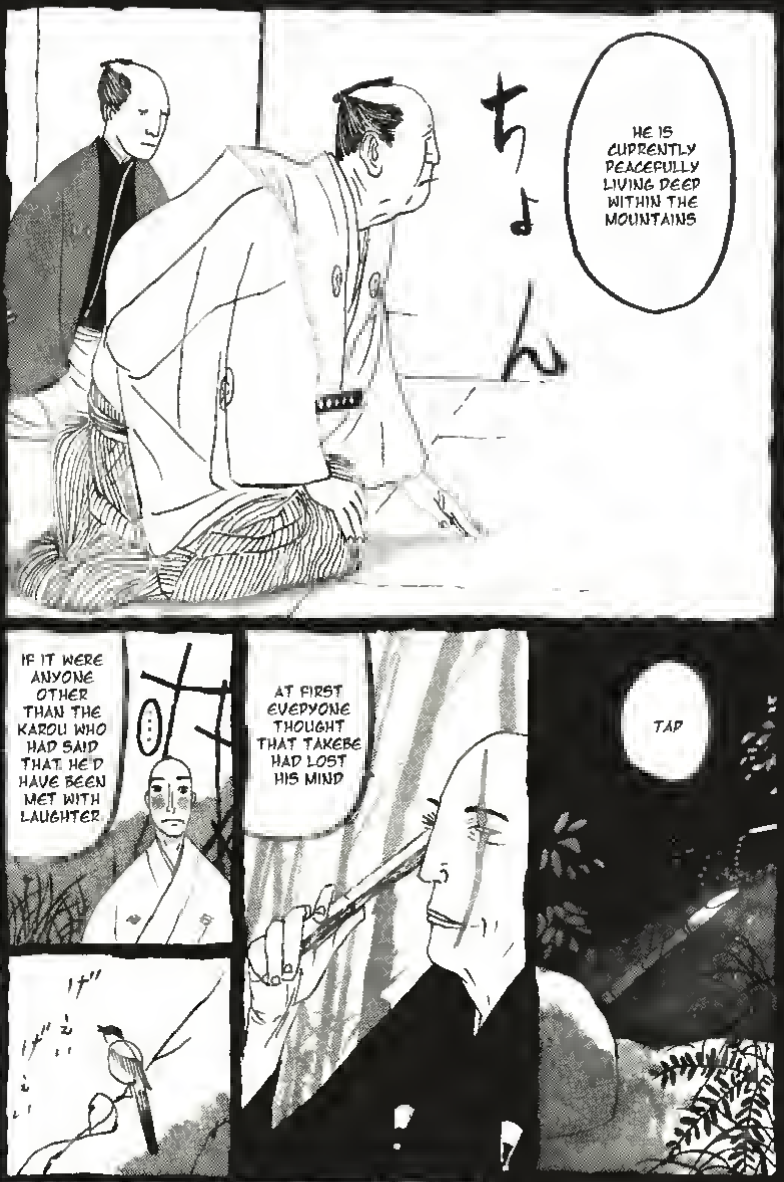
OMURASAKI JUUZO'S LONG STORY PART 1

I WAS THE ONE WHO ORDERED THE MEN TO BURN IT DOWN.
YES,
THE HOUSE HAS ALL BURNT DOWN
CLANG
ぼっ
DID SIR BURN IT DOWN TO KILL THEM?
NO.
THOSE TWO LIVED OUT HERE, DEEP IN THE MOUNTAINS, WITH THEIR SON.
ツリツリ
オーン
ツリツリ
オーン
キキキ
キキキ

THE FATHER HUNTED PHEASANTS AND OTHER ANIMALS TO TRADE FOR RICE FROM THE VILLAGE NEARBY
I'VE HEARD THAT THEY WERE HELPED AND LOOKED AFTER BY TAKEBE.
BUT WHY HAD TAKEBE TRIED TO HIDE THAT FACT?
FLIP
HE WAS WAITING FOR HIS CHANCE
HE HAD BEEN SECRETLY HELPING THEM... ALL SO THAT HE COULD REAP THE BENEFITS WHEN THE TIME CAME.
HE'S A VERY CLEVER ONE, THAT TAKEBE...
BUT NOT EVERYTHING COULD GO EXACTLY AS HE PLANNED.

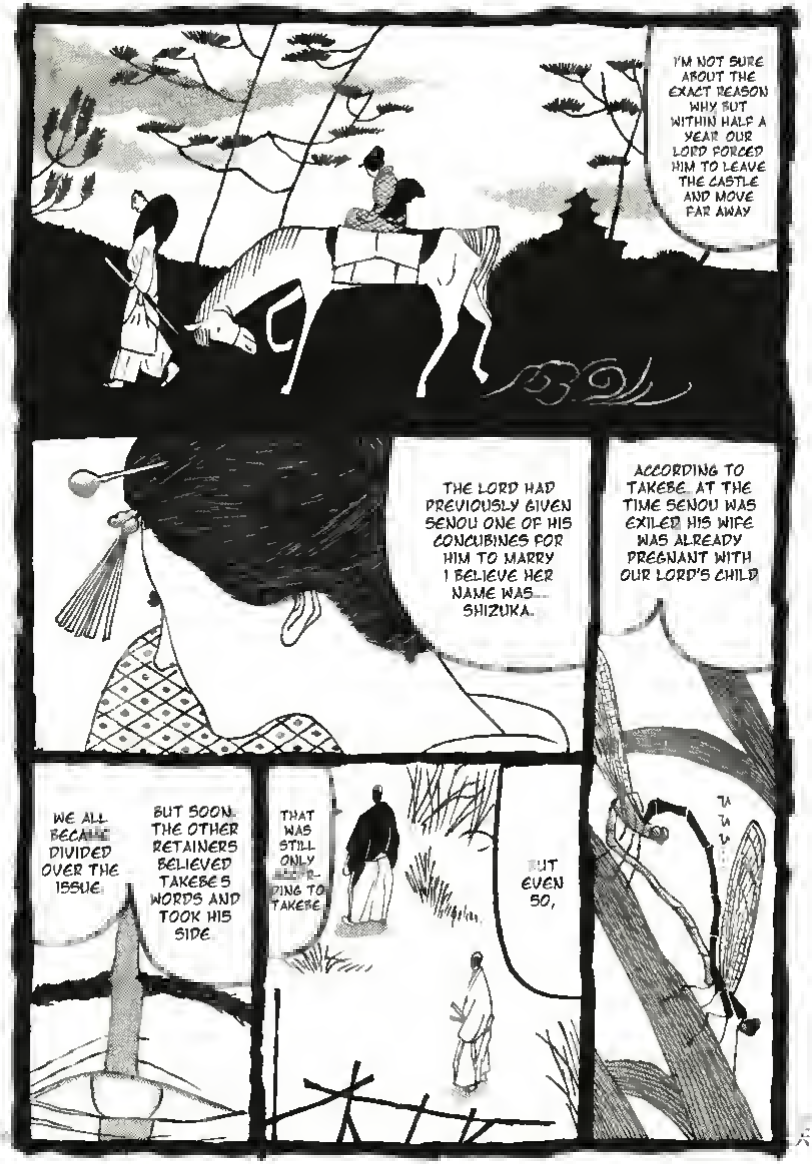


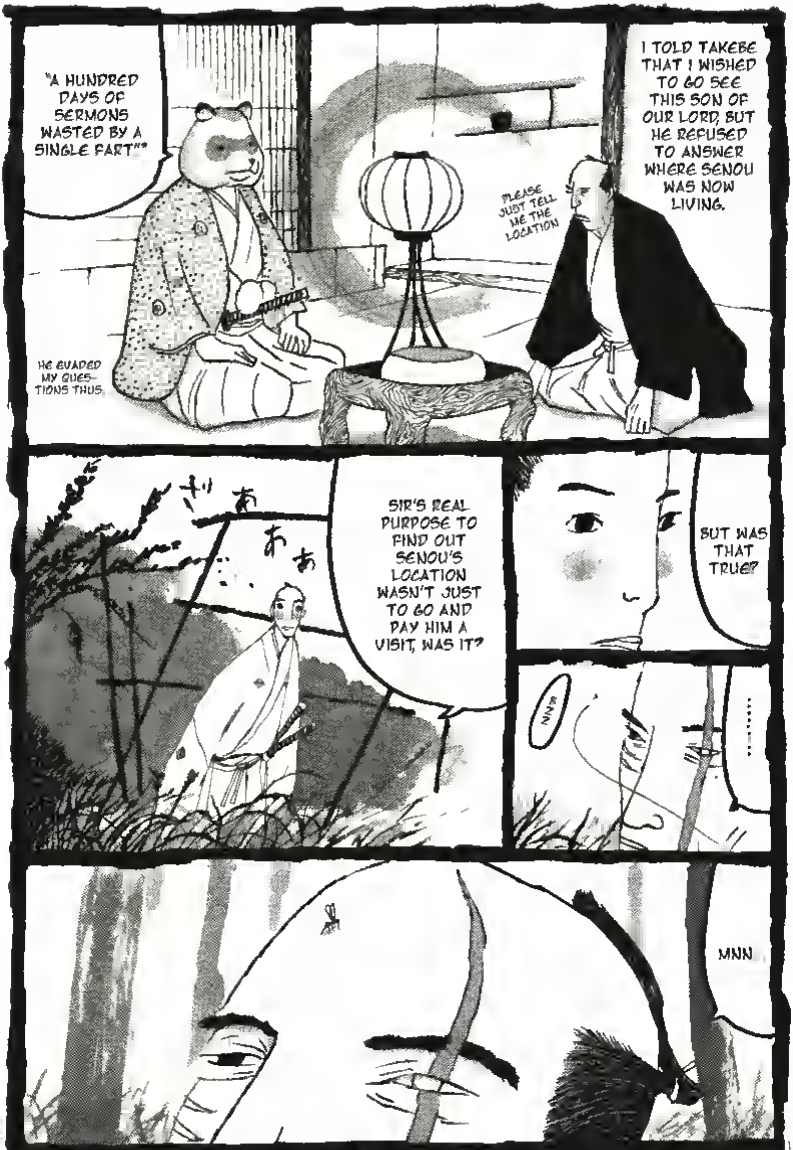
HMM, HIS STOMACH... I SEE...
THE DOCTOR SAYS THE LORD'S ILLNESS IS CAUSED BY THE SWELLING OF HIS STOMACH
THAT'S A LITTLE OUT OF LINE OMURASAKI. WE MUST PRIORITIZE OUR LORD'S FRAIL CONDITION RIGHT NOW.
BUT IF WE DO NOT TAKE ANY MEASURES SOON, OUR LORD'S DOMAIN WILL BE SCRAPPED BY THE SHOGUNATE BECAUSE HE DOES NOT HAVE A HEIR.
HMM...
HIS ONLY NEPHEW TOYOMARU IS NOT EVEN 10. MAYBE ONCE HE REACHES OF
OUR LORD ALREADY HAS A SON.
BUT THERE IS A LEGITIMATE CHILD
EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE ONCE THAT HAPPENS.
THERE'S NO CHOICE BUT TO ADOPT TOYOMARU GIMI AS HIS SON.


ちょん
HE IS CURRENTLY PEACEFULLY LIVING DEEP WITHIN THE MOUNTAINS
TAP
AT FIRST EVERYONE THOUGHT THAT TAKEBE HAD LOST HIS MIND
IF IT WERE ANYONE OTHER THAN THE KAROU WHO HAD SAID THAT, HE'D HAVE BEEN MET WITH LAUGHTER
It"
It"

ABOUT SENOU SOUEMON, THAT IS
OMURASAKI, I'M SURE YOU REMEMBER AS WELL...
SENOU!?
WHAT!?
HAHHH!

SMACK
HE WAS VERY STRONG
SENOU
HE WAS A MAN WHO TAUGHT OUR LORD SWORDSMANSHIP LONG AGO
BZZ
HE WAS SAID TO BE THE GREATEST SWORDSMAN IN ALL OF SHINANO, AND SO OUR LORD CALLED FOR SENOU TO TEACH HIM
STAND UP!
I SPARRED WITH HIM SEVERAL TIMES AS WELL BUT I WAS NO MATCH FOR HIM
I AM BEATEN.
DAMN
BZZ


I'M NOT SURE ABOUT THE EXACT REASON WHY BUT WITHIN HALF A YEAR OUR LORD FORCED HIM TO LEAVE THE CASTLE AND MOVE FAR AWAY
THE LORD HAD PREVIOUSLY GIVEN SENOU ONE OF HIS CONCUBINES FOR HIM TO MARRY I BELIEVE HER NAME WAS... SHIZUKA.
ACCORDING TO TAKEBE, AT THE TIME SENOU WAS EXILED HIS WIFE WAS ALREADY PREGNANT WITH OUR LORD'S CHILD
WE ALL BECAME DIVIDED OVER THE ISSUE.
BUT SOON, THE OTHER RETAINERS BELIEVED TAKEBE'S WORDS AND TOOK HIS SIDE.
THAT WAS STILL ONLY HEAR-SAY ACCORDING TO TAKEBE.
BUT EVEN SO,


"A HUNDRED DAYS OF SERMONS WASTED BY A SINGLE FART"*
HE GUARDED MY QUESTIONS THUS.
I TOLD TAKEBE THAT I WISHED TO GO SEE THIS SON OF OUR LORD, BUT HE REFUSED TO ANSWER WHERE SENOU WAS NOW LIVING.
PLEASE JUST TELL ME THE LOCATION
SIR'S REAL PURPOSE TO FIND OUT SENOU'S LOCATION WASN'T JUST TO GO AND PAY HIM A VISIT, WAS IT?
BUT WAS THAT TRUE?
MNN
.....
MNN

*JAPANESE ADAGE THAT REFERS TO EFFORT/WORK PUT IN OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME BEING WASTED BECAUSE OF A SLIGHT SLIP-UP

GRIN
SLAP
BEING A SMALL VILLAGE THERE WEREN'T TOO MANY PLACES TO SEARCH.
BUT NO MATTER HOW HARD TAKEBE TRIED TO HIDE THE WHEREABOUTS OF SENOU'S HOME I FOUND OUT EASILY SOON ENOUGH
WIDE
IN THE BITTER COLD NIGHT AT 2 IN THE MORNING, I AND 4 OTHER MEN HEADED OVER TO HIS HOME.

EZAKI, KINOSHITA, SAKAI, SHIMURA... WE WERE ALL CLOSE FRIENDS THAT HAD TRAINED TOGETHER IN THE WAY OF THE SWORD SINCE CHILDHOOD
THE BIG 4 OF TATEISHI
WITHOUT RIDING ON HORSES, WE CLIMBED UP THE MOUNTAIN IN THE MIDDLE OF NIGHT

IT WAS AROUND THOSE TREES OVER THERE...
THERE, WE SQUATTED DOWN AND PREPARED OURSELVES.
EVEN IF THIS IS ALL FOR THE PEACE AND SECURITY OF OUR HOUSE, THIS IS STILL A RATHER GRUESOME TASK.
WE MUST NOT LET OUR DETERMINATION WAVER SO EASILY EZAKI.
YES, THIS WILL BE QUITE GRAVE, INDEED.
NEVER MIND SENOU, BUT CUTTING DOWN HIS WIFE AND CHILD...

I WILL CUT DOWN THE WOMAN AND CHILD.
BUT WE DON'T EVEN KNOW IF HE'S THE REALLY OUR LORD'S SON OR NOT
ISN'T THAT WHY WE'VE COME?
TAKEBE DID SAY THAT WE WOULD UNDERSTAND IMMEDIATELY WHEN WE SEE HIM. JUUZO.
BUT THAT'S ONLY ACCORDING TO THAT TANUKI
WE CAN'T TAKE EVERYTHING HE SAYS SERIOUSLY
HMM?
THWACK

HAHH!
THWACK!
THWACK!
HE'S MUCH TOO YOUNG TO BE SOUEMON
NO,
IS THAT SOUEMON?
HE'S GOING AT IT VERY HARD
HAHH!

DO YOU LIVE AROUND THESE PARTS?
YOU'RE VERY ENERGETIC TO BE TRAINING SO HARD AT EARLY DAWN
TURN
I THOUGHT I WOULD ALMOST COLLAPSE FROM THE SHOCK.
T...
AH YES I TRAIN MYSELF ON THIS TREE HERE NIGHT AND DAY
AHH!

I LIVE WITH MY FATHER AND MOTHER JUST A LITTLE AHEAD FROM HERE.
AND THERE WAS OUR LORD STANDING BEFORE ME.
OMURASAKI JUUZO'S STORY TO BE CONTINUED...

【第三十三話】
大村崎十三の長い話
CHAPTER 33
OMURASAKI JUUZO'S LONG STORY PART 2

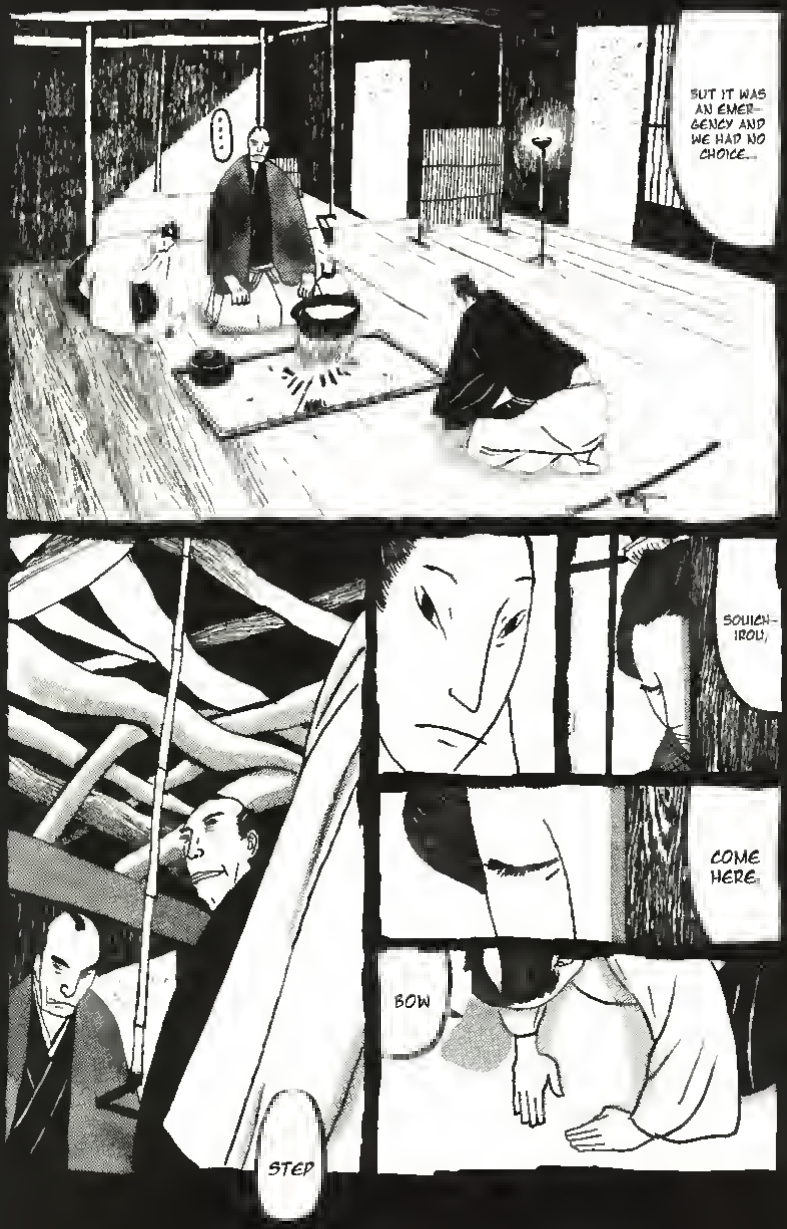
CLACK
.....

FATHER!
.....
CHOP

I WONDER IF YOU STILL REMEMBER ME, OMURA-SAKI JUUZO?
IT'S BEEN A LONG WHILE, SENOU.
HAVE YOU REALLY FORGOTTEN? WE SPARRED A COUPLE TIMES BACK WHEN YOU WERE TEACHING OUR LORD IN THE ART OF SWORDSMANSHIP

.....
PLEASE, COME INSIDE...
THANK YOU.
ガン
OF COURSE. I WAS NO MATCH FOR YOU

THE DARK, TANNED FACE OF SENOU SEEMED TO HAVE AGED MUCH OLDER THAN THE YEARS SHOULD HAVE.
FROM HIS EXPRESSION IT SEEMED HE HAD ALWAYS REALIZED THAT THE TIME WOULD COME WHEN WE CAME TO VISIT
FORGIVE US FOR BARGING IN SO SUD-- DENLY WITHOUT EVEN GIVING YOU ANY PRIOR NOTICE


BUT IT WAS AN EMER-GENCY AND WE HAD NO CHOICE...
SOUICH-IROU,
COME HERE.
BOW
STEP

IT SEEMS YOU'VE PUT HIM THROUGH SOME HARSH TRAINING
SO HIS NAME IS SOUICHIROU, I SEE...
OUR LORD HAS COLLAPSED DUE TO AN ILLNESS.
CUT TO THE CHASE.
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN HOW TO SPEAK, SENOU?
BUT RIGHT NOW THE HOUSE IS DIVIDED OVER THE ISSUE OF WHO WILL SUCCEED OUR LORD.
I'M SURE YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD FROM TAKEBE ALREADY SO I WON'T TALK OF THE SPECIFICS.

I WANT YOU TO TAKE THIS AND MOVE TO SOME-WHERE FAR FROM HERE UNTIL THE MATTER OF INHERITANCE IS SETTLED
GRIP
HERE IS 30 RYO
WE WILL HELP YOU MOVE UP UNTIL THE BORDERS.
STEP

MNN...
OMURASAKI, IF YOU WANT TO SUCCESSFULLY KILL SOMEONE
YOU MUST HIDE YOUR KILLING INTENT UNTIL THE VERY LAST MOMENT
DASH
I COULD SMELL YOU AND YOUR 4 COMPANIONS' STRONG INTENTS TO KILL EVER SINCE YOU CAME.
IT SEEMS YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT, JUUZO

I STILL VIVIDLY REMEMBER HOW CUNNING YOUR SWORD WAS.
HMPH...
THE KID HAS RUN OFF TO THE MOUNTAINS!
WHAT!?
THE WOMAN LET HIM SECRETLY SLIP OUT!
GRIP

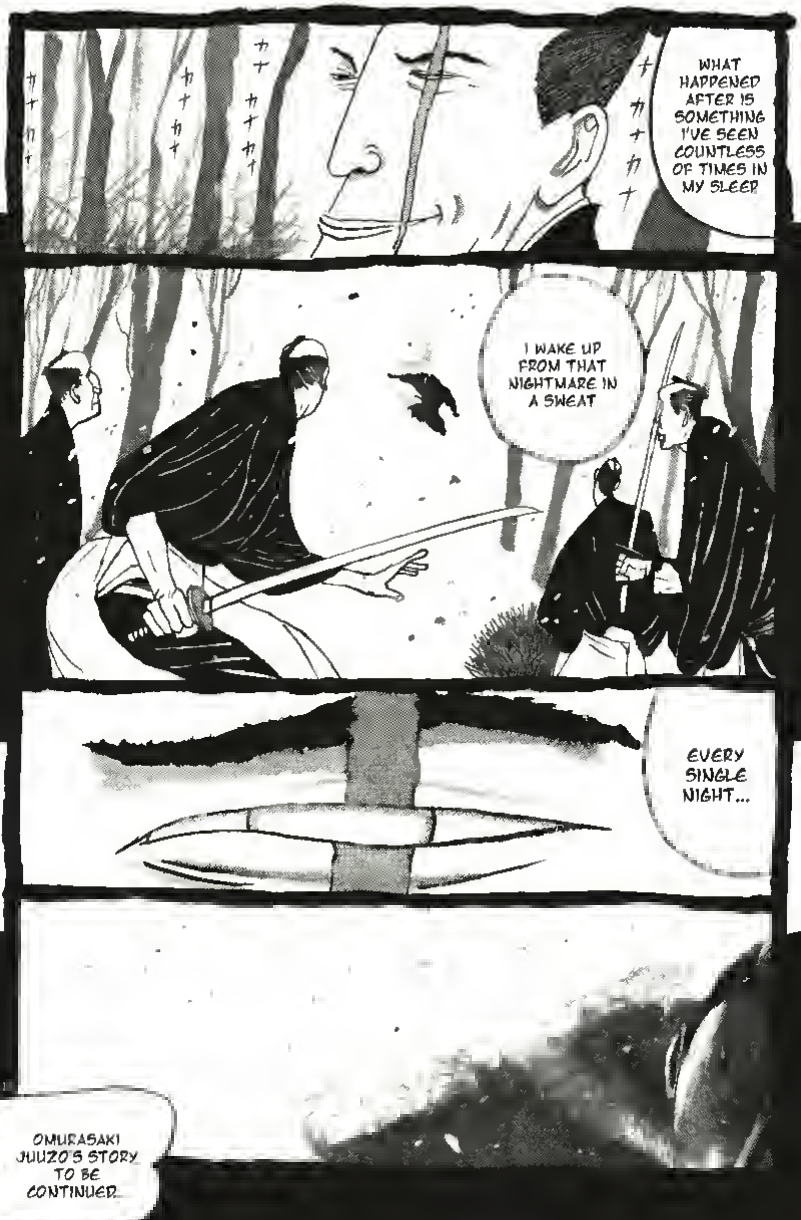
GET THE WOMAN AND FORCE HER TO CALL THE SON BACK!
AGHH! IT'S NO GOOD!

WHO HAD JUST SEEN HIS WIFE COMMIT SUICIDE,
SENOU,
ALMOST LOOKED AS IF HE WERE SMILING.
HURRY!
BURN DOWN THE HOUSE!
NO, WE WON'T MAKE IT IN TIME!
SHOULD WE CHASE AFTER HIM!?

CLANG
UGH!

SENOU NO LONGER HAD HIS FORMER STRENGTH AND FEROCITY

ALL OF US BELIEVED THE WHOLE MATTER WOULD NOW BE SETTLED QUICKLY.
AS WE SAW HIM RETURNING BACK,
HE CAME BACK JUST LIKE I THOUGHT HE WOULD
すっ


カナカナ
カナカナ
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WHAT HAPPENED AFTER IS SOMETHING I'VE SEEN COUNTLESS OF TIMES IN MY SLEEP
I WAKE UP FROM THAT NIGHTMARE IN A SWEAT
EVERY SINGLE NIGHT...
OMURASAKI JUUZO'S STORY TO BE CONTINUED...

CHAPTER 34 OMURASAKI JUUZO'S LONG STORY PART 3

CHAPTER 34
OMURASAKI'S
JUUZO'S
LONG STORY
PART 3

キーン
ゆっ
どっ
だっ

SLASH
ぱおおろ
おおお

CLANG
UGH!
ARGHH!

WHAT?
TAKE COVER JUUZO!
NGHH!
ARGHHH!

HAHH!

……
すっ

UGH ...
UGHHH ...
FATHER!
FATHER?

ガッ

!
.....
!!
DAMN
....

DULLED BY CUTTING THROUGH THE FLESH AND BONE OF MY MEN, HIS SWORD MIRACULOUSLY FAILED TO KILL ME.
AS I LIED THERE ON THE SNOW, I THOUGHT I HEARD HIS FATHER APOLOGIZING TO HIS SON FOR WHAT HAD HAPPENED BUT I AM NOT SURE IF THAT WAS MERELY MY IMAGINATION.
BUT JUST BEFORE I LOST CONSCIOUSNESS, I FAINTLY HEARD HIM TELLING HIS SON TO GO TO EDO...

AND I EVENTUALLY FOUND THAT FOX AGAIN IN EDO...
I HAD HEARD THE BIG 4 WERE PLOTTING TO OVER-THROW OUR LORD
THAT'S WHAT I SAID
ひそ-ひそ
I LIED TO THE OTHERS THAT THEY HAD BEEN PLOTTING A REBELLION
AND THAT THEY FLED WHEN I FOUND OUT.

LOOKING AT THE BLACK SMOKE, THEY HAD COME UP TO THE MOUNTAINS TO SEE WHAT WAS BURNING
BUT I WAS LATER RESCUED BY PEOPLE FROM A NEARBY VILLAGE
NO, I WAS NOT SAVED THAT DAY
HA,
IT SEEMS THAT THE FIRE STARTED TO LURE THE FOX ENDED UP SAVING SIR S LIFE
INCLUDING SENOU SOUEMON, THEY DIS- COVERED 5 CORPSES, AND ME, WHO WAS JUST BARELY ALIVE.
THIS BODY OF MINE MAY BE OLD BUT ITS SOUL HAS ALREADY DIED
I DIED ON THAT DAY WITH MY COMRADES.

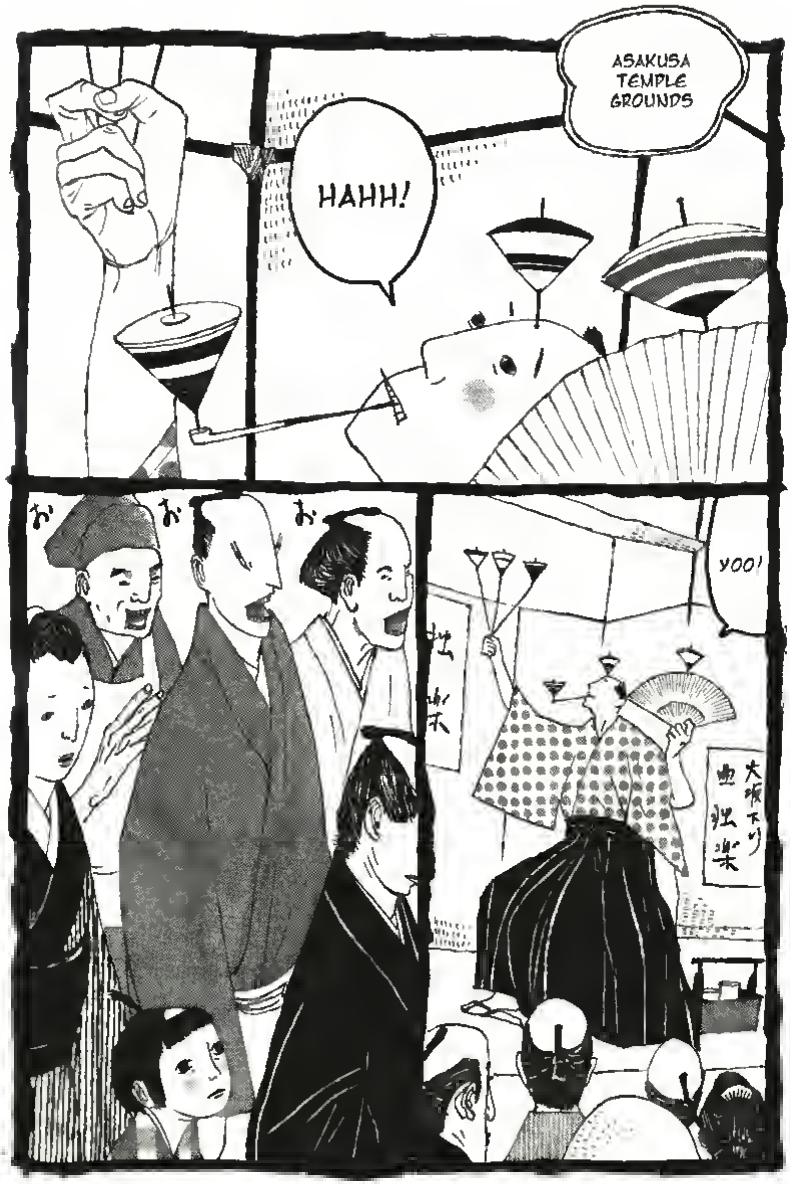
HA HA HA
TURN
THE MAN YOU'RE TALKING TO RIGHT NOW IS JUST A DEAD MAN.
THE SUN IS SETTING.
ALRIGHT LET US RETURN HOME.
OMURASAKI JUUZO'S LONG STORY -END-

CHAPTER 35

THE SUN SETS QUICKLY IN THE FALL

EDO. KANDA SHIRAKA-BECHOU
IT WAS SO BEAUTIFUL THAT I ALMOST THOUGHT I HAD DIED AND GONE TO HEAVEN.
I'VE SEEN MANY BUILD-INGS IN THE CAPITAL AND OSAKA...
BUT NONE OF THOSE COULD EVEN COMPARE TO IT
SPLENDID AND EXTRAVA-GANT PAINT-INGS ENOUGH TO MAKE ONE'S EYES SPIN...
I COULD NOT HELP BUT TREMBLE IN AWE AT THE SIGHT OF IT ALL.

ゴロゴロ
BUT IT WASN'T UNTIL A LONG TIME AFTER THAT I FOUND OUT IT WAS CALLED NIKKO TOSHOGU SHRINE.


ASAKUSA TEMPLE GROUNDS
HAHH!
YOO!
大阪下り 曲独楽

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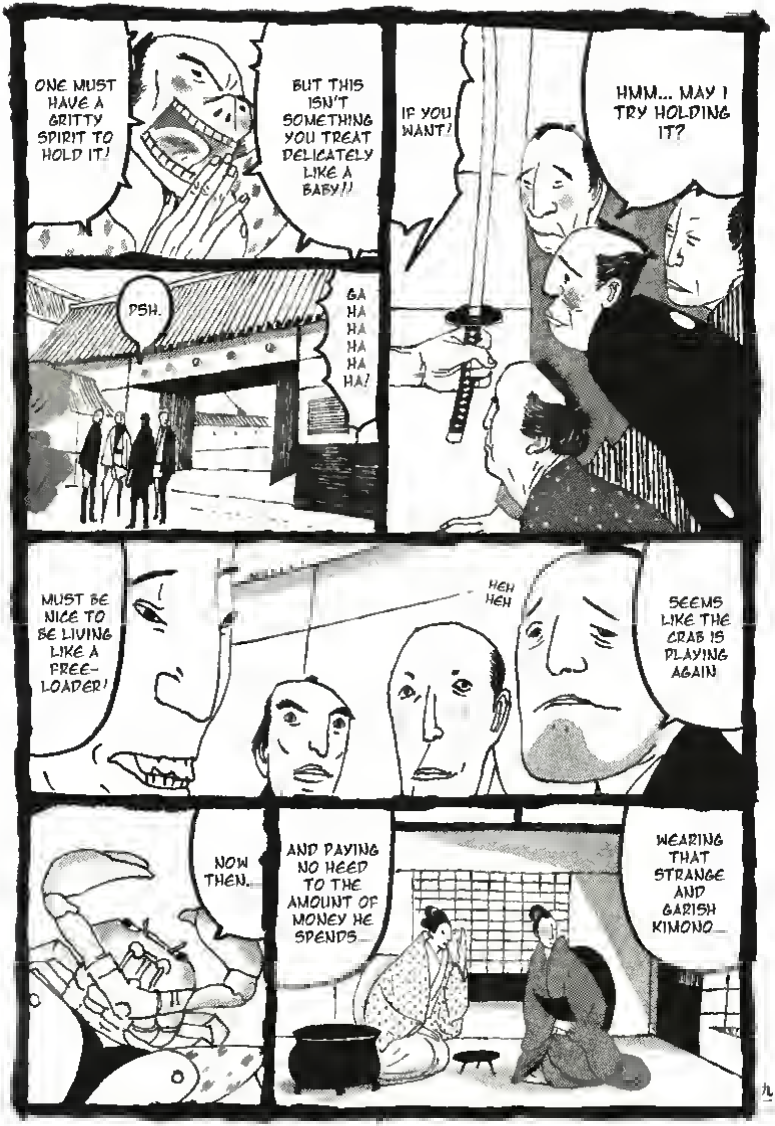
AH, SOUICHIROU!
AH, HELLO GENJI. IT'S BEEN A LONG WHILE.
ARE YOU OUT TOGETHER WITH YOUR MASTER RIGHT NOW?
HAHAHA, WE'RE NOT ALWAYS TOGETHER.
HOW IS HE DOING? IS HE STILL WELL?
HE'S THE SAME AS ALWAYS
THESE DAYS, HE IS SHOWING OFF HIS NEWLY PURCHASED SWORD AND ARMOUR TO PEOPLE.

IF POSSIBLE, YOU SHOULD COME AND VISIT HIM AS WELL.
AFTER ALL, YOU ARE HIS ONLY FRIEND AND ALLY.
YES.
I SHALL COME VISIT HIM AGAIN SOON.
HEY LET'S GO, GENJI!
ALRIGHT, I'M GOING, I'M GOING!!
EXCUSE ME I THEN

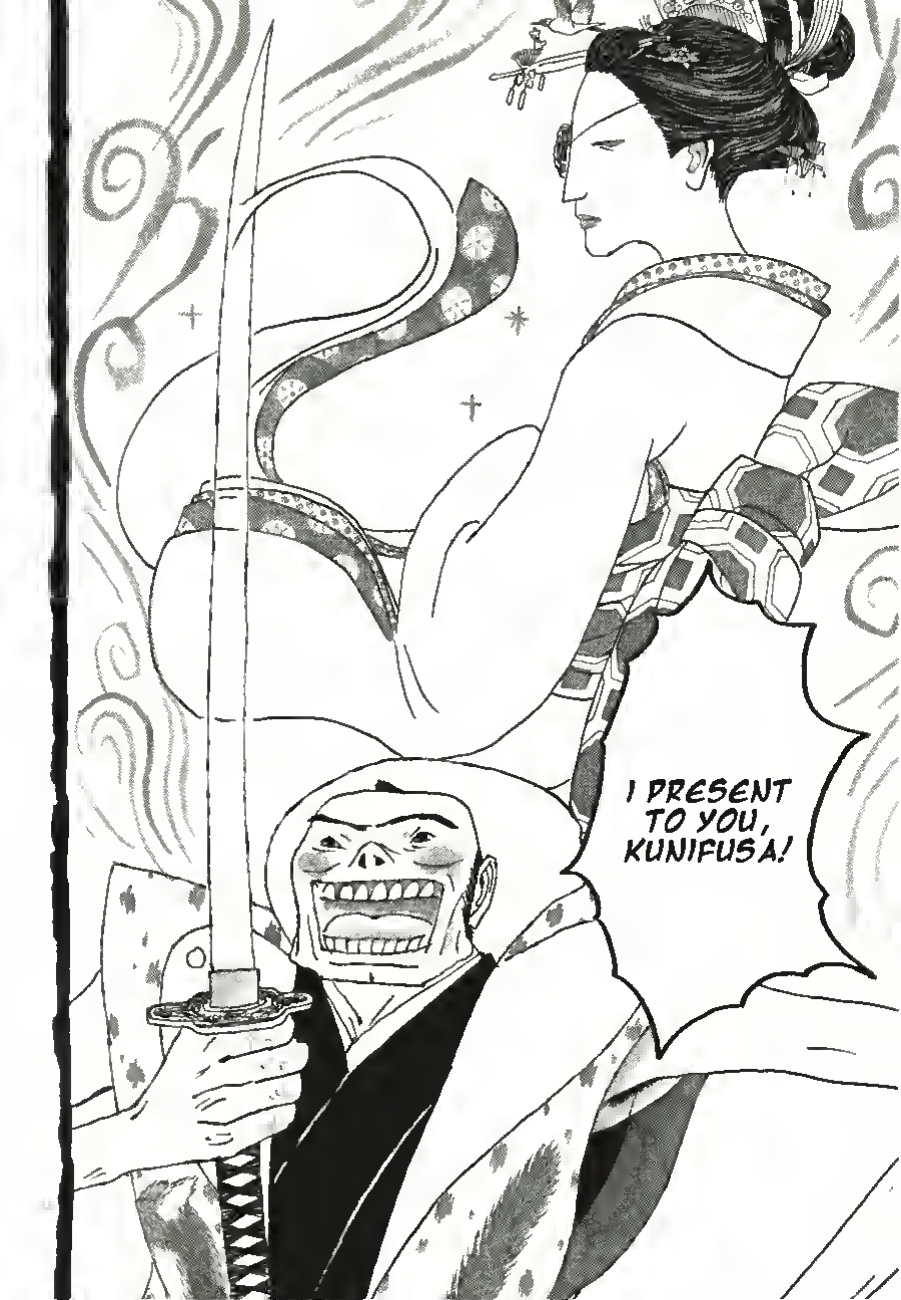
WHAT A LIVELY CITY...
HA HA HA
LIKE A NEVER-ENDING FESTIVAL ...

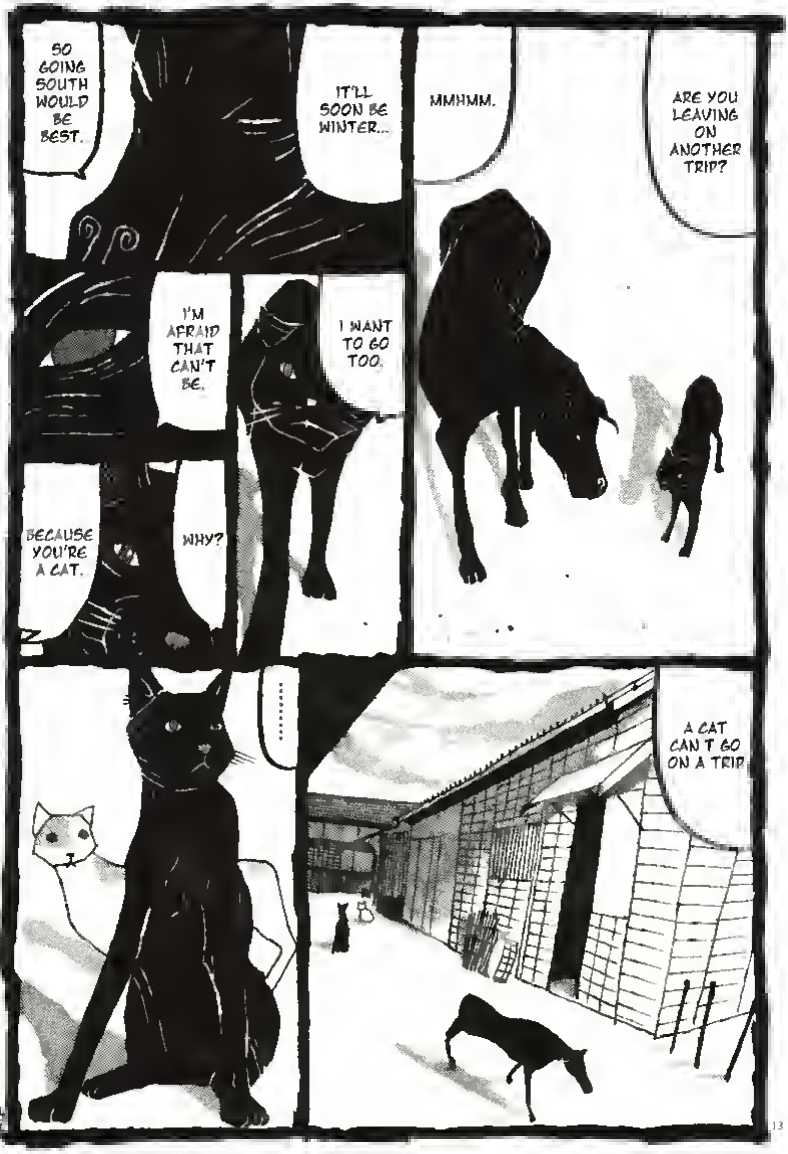
IT'S NAME, "SAYA-WARI"!
BANCHOU, MIKOSHI ESTATE
THIS IS THE NODA HANZUI'S MASTER-WORK BLADE!
WELL, THAT'S TO BE EXPECTED HANZUI WAS AN ECCENTRIC MAN, BUT HE WAS THE DISCIPLE OF THE RENOWNED NODA HANKEI!
I MUST SHAMEFULLY ADMIT THAT I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THE SWORDSMITH NODA HANZUI .
GA HA HA HA
AND THIS IS THE ONLY REMAINING WORK OF HANZUI!!!

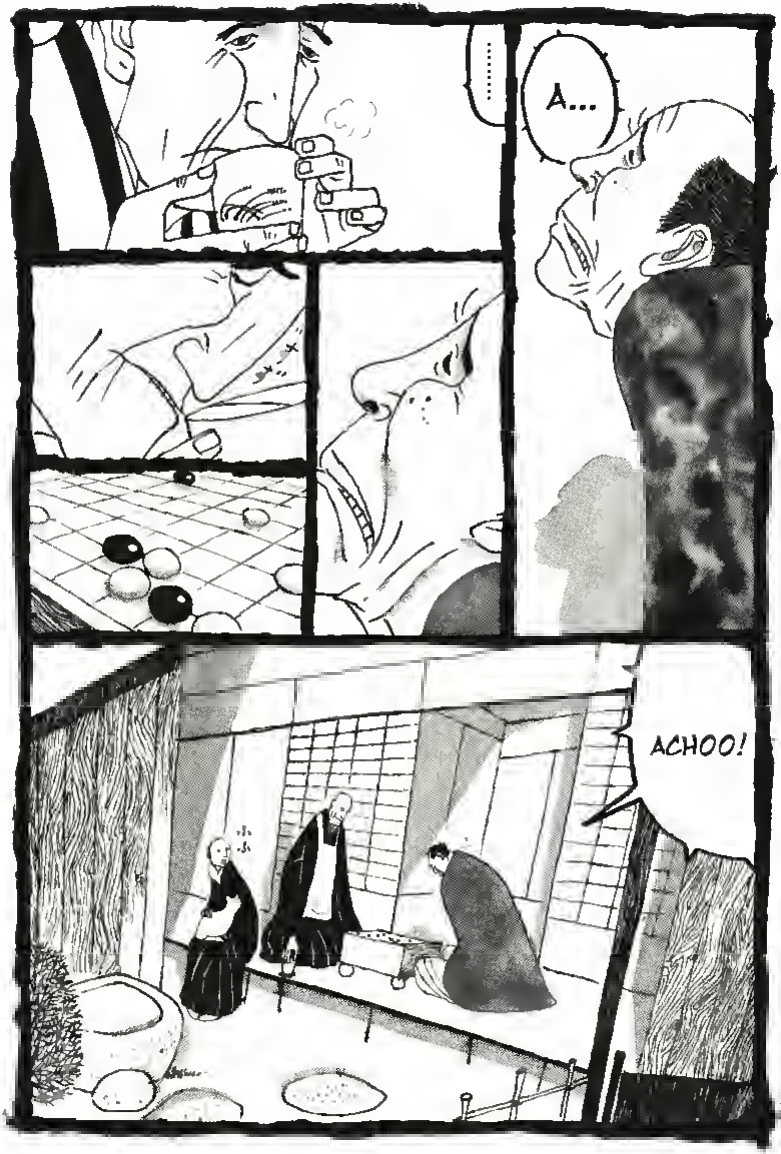

ONE MUST HAVE A GRITTY SPIRIT TO HOLD IT!
BUT THIS ISN'T SOMETHING YOU TREAT DELICATELY LIKE A BABY!!
HMM... MAY I TRY HOLDING IT?
IF YOU WANT!
PSH.
GA HA HA HA HA HA!
MUST BE NICE TO BE LIVING LIKE A FREE-LOADER!
HEH HEH
SEEMS LIKE THE CRAB IS PLAYING AGAIN
NOW THEN...
AND PAYING NO HEED TO THE AMOUNT OF MONEY HE SPENDS...
WEARING THAT STRANGE AND GARISH KIMONO...

THE REAL REASON WHY I INVITED ALL OF YOU HERE TODAY...
WAS TO SHOW YOU THIS SWORD!!!
SSHH...
I CHANGED THE KOSHIRAE* TO FIT MY TASTES
UNSHEATHE!
IT IS ALSO KNOWN BY A RATHER UNSETTLING NICKNAME... "THE BLIGHTED SWORD"
MY RECENT AND GREATEST FIND!
OHH...

*THE MOUNTING WORN BY THE BLADE


I PRESENT TO YOU, KUNIFUSA!


SO GOING SOUTH WOULD BE BEST.
IT'LL SOON BE WINTER...
MMHMM.
ARE YOU LEAVING ON ANOTHER TRIP?
I'M AFRAID THAT CAN'T BE.
I WANT TO GO TOO.
BECAUSE YOU'RE A CAT.
WHY?
.....
A CAT CAN'T GO ON A TRIP.


.....
A...
ACHOO!

YAAAAWWWWW
THE STORE OWNER WAS UNWILLING TO SELL THIS SWORD AT FIRST...
SLEEPY
AND WHEN I ASKED HIM WHY HE TOLD ME IT WAS BECAUSE THERE WAS RONIN WHO WAS TRYING TO BUY BACK THIS SWORD

SPIT!
MUNCH MUNCH
DROR..

SPIT!

SPIT!
4 IN THE AFTERNOON

SHINANO PROVINCE,
VICINITY OF
ICHIDA TOWN
10 IN THE MORNING
BITE
CHAPTER 36
MORI SAZATAROU GOES TO EDO

SENJU SOUICHIROU
FOX-LIKE FACE
HEIGHT: 5.5 SHAKU
SCAR ON LEFT ARM
MUNCH
MUNCH

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TAKEISHI CASTLE, OMURASAKI JUUZO SEARCHES FOR MORI DURING THE MEETING
.....
WHERE IS MORI?
HE DEPARTED FOR EDO THIS MORNING, SIR.
EDO?
FOR WHAT?
.....
I HEARD IT WAS UNDER SIR'S ORDERS.
WHAT?

GOOD, GOOD.
SO HE LEFT ALREADY, DID HE?
OF COURSE, OF COURSE.
AH,
TAP
.....
!
ANOTHER RETAINER GONE...?
I HEAR THAT THE RETAINERS STATIONED AT EDO GO TO THE 2ND FLOOR OF SOME APOTHECARY WHEN THEY ARE OFF-DUTY AND BUSY THEMSELVES PLOTTING SOMETHING ALL DAY.
I SMELL SOMETHING GOING ON...
HMM. WHAT IS HE TALKING ABOUT?
WHO KNOWS.

ATTENTION, GENTLEMEN. DUE TO OUR LORD'S ILLNESS,
I, AS THE HEAD KAROU, SHALL LEAD AND OVERSEE TODAY'S MEETING.
PLEASE ENTER THE ROOM AND TAKE YOUR SEATS.
THAT MORI, EVEN AFTER I TOLD HIM NOT TO.
ふうむ
カリ カリ

I'M REALLY VERY SORRY TO HAVE A SAMURAI DO THIS KIND OF MENIAL LABOUR...
NO, NOT AT ALL. IT ONLY NEEDS TO BE PUSHED UP THIS HILL, AFTER ALL...
BESIDES, IT'LL HELP KEEP MY BODY FIT!
ガ"ガ"ガ"
はあ
はあ
はあ
I WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE COSTS FOR THE ANNUAL TRIP TO EDO...
THE COSTS ARE CURRENTLY ESTIMATED AT 500 RYO...
REALLY SORRY...
SAY NO MORE

IT IS AS YOU SAY, SIR.
YES.
WOULD WE NOT BE ABLE TO CUT DOWN THE COSTS BY A LARGE AMOUNT? WELL, MIZUNO?
IF WE REDUCE THE NUMBER OF ATTENDANTS AND TURN DOWN THE GIFTS TO ELIMINATE THE NEED FOR GIFTING BACK,
UGH, HERE WE GO AGAIN...
AS IT IS WRITTEN IN THE ANALECTS OF CONFUCIUS TO BE WASTEFULLY EXTRAVAGANT IS IMMORAL.
WE CAN BRING OUR OWN POTS AND CUT DOWN ON COSTS EVEN FURTHER.
SIMILARLY FOR THE MEALS.
IN OBSERVING RITUALS AND TRADITIONS, IT IS BETTER TO BE FRUGAL THAN EXTRAVAGANT. IN MOURNING IT IS BETTER TO BE SAD THAN TO BE METICULOUS IN THE ARRANGEMENTS.
THANK YOU AGAIN.
EXTRAVAGANCE LEADS TO CONFUSION IN MATERIALISM. FRUGALITY LEADS TO THE SIMPLICITY OF PEACE AND HARMONY

PEOPLE WHO ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR ONENESS WITH HUMANITY FLOW IN PEACE AND HARMONY THOSE WHO HAVE FORGOTTEN THEIR ONENESS WITH HUMANITY ARE CONFUSED AND FULL OF TENSION AND ANXIETY
YES.
THERE ARE BANDITS AROUND THESE PARTS
PLEASE TAKE CARE, MR. SAMURAI.
!!!
YAWN...
KINOUCHI, IF YOU FEEL SO TIRED THEN YOU ARE DISMISSED!
N-NO SIR I WAS ONLY...!
SILENCE! IT IS BECAUSE YOU LACK DISCIPLINE!
ARGHHH!
DO YOU GENTLEMEN KNOW THE MEANING OF THE WORD KANNEIJACHI? IT REFERS TO A TREACHEROUS AND CUNNING...

YES.
THE MORNINGS AND NIGHTS ARE GETTING COLDER THESE DAYS
AH WELL, I'M RATHER FOND OF TRAVELLING ALONE.
IT'S QUITE RARE TO SEE A SAMURAI TRAVELLING ALONE..
YES. ONE MUST TAKE CARE TO KEEP WARM IN THIS SEASON..
ふう
YES, MY WIFE PASSED AWAY SOME TIME AGO. SO IT IS JUST ME NOW
DO YOU RUN THIS STORE ALL BY YOURSELF, OLD MAN?

HMM
HEY, CHECK IT OUT THERE'S A CUTE LITTLE SAMURAI ALL BY HIMSELF
AND HIS SWORD LOOKS QUITE NICE TOO!

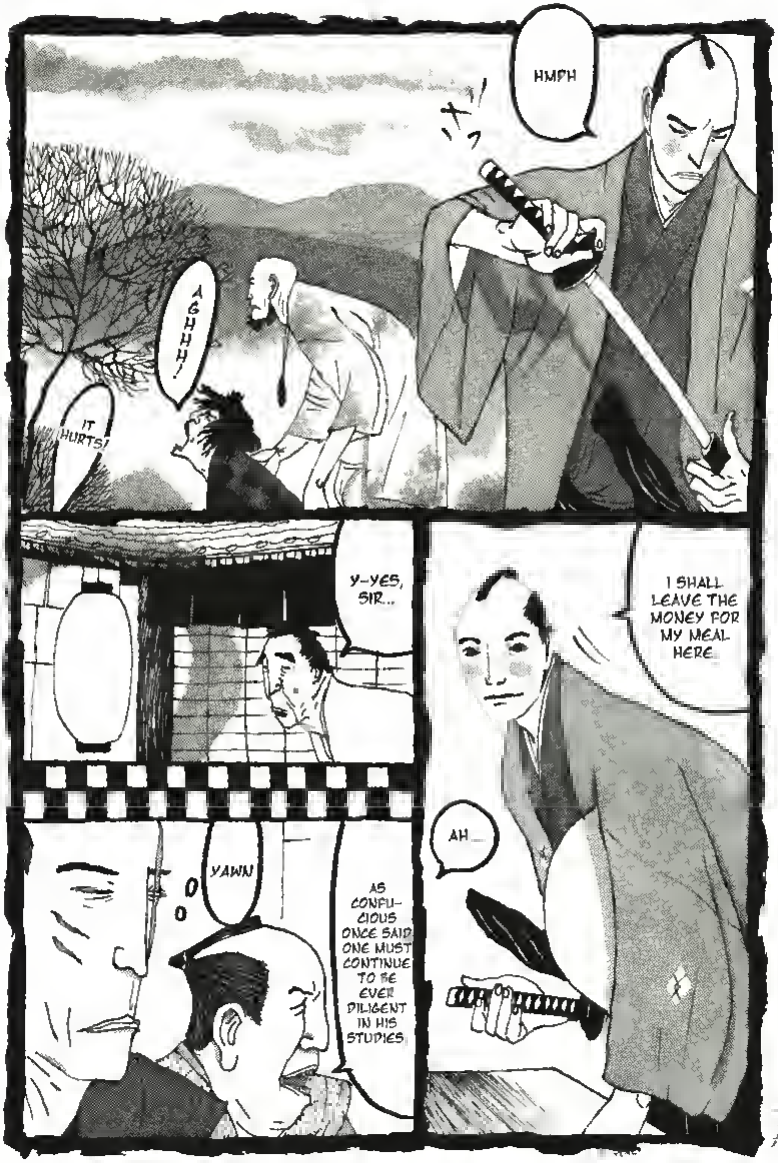
THAT'S A NICE KIMONO YOU GOT
HAHA, HE'S GOT A CUTE FACE TO GO WITH IT
IF YOU'RE TIRED WE COULD HELP CARRY YOUR STUFF
NO, I CAN CARRY IT MYSELF
UGH, HE SMELLS
.....
SO, WHERE YA HEADED OFF TO?
IT'S FINE, I'D RATHER KEEP TO MYSELF
I SAID.. WHERE ARE YA HEADED OFF TO!?
.....

SOME SAKE ABOUT NOW WOULD REALLY HIT THE SPOT
SAME HERE
AGHH MAN, AM I EVER STARVING RIGHT NOW...
IS THAT SO...?
がっ
ほいっ

HAHH!
ギャ

THAT BASTARD!
I HAVE NO MONEY TO GIVE TO YOU AND YOUR ILK!

AS OUTCASTS, YOU SHOULD RETURN BACK INTO THE DARK!
KNOW THAT YOU ARE HUMAN SCUM. ONLY FIT TO LIVE A MAGGOT'S LIFE!!!


HMPH
AGHHH!
IT HURTS!
I SHALL LEAVE THE MONEY FOR MY MEAL HERE.
AH...
Y-YES, SIR...
YAWN
AS CONFUCIOUS ONCE SAID ONE MUST CONTINUE TO BE EVER DILIGENT IN HIS STUDIES.

THERE ARE THREE THINGS TO AVOID WHEN SPEAKING WITH A PERSON IN AUTHORITY. SPEAKING BEFORE ONE IS SPOKEN TO BECAUSE IT IS PRESUMPTUOUS. NOT SPEAKING WHEN ONE IS ASKED A QUESTION BECAUSE IT WILL SEEM EVASIVE AND SPEAKING BEFORE ONE OBSERVES THE FACIAL EXPRESSION OF A PERSON IN AUTHORITY BECAUSE IT IS FOOLISH. THERE ARE THREE THINGS WHICH A PERSON WHO FLOWS IN PEACE AND HARMONY SHOULD GUARD AGAINST. IN HIS YOUTH WHEN HIS LIFE FORCE IS UNSTABLE HE SHOULD GUARD AGAINST CARNAL PLEASURES. IN HIS PRIME WHEN HIS LIFE FORCE IS STRONG AND STABLE HE SHOULD GUARD AGAINST BEING CONTENTIOUS. IN HIS OLD AGE WHEN HIS LIFE FORCE IS DECLINING, HE SHOULD GUARD AGAINST GREED.
I WONDER WHERE MORI IS ABOUT NOW...?
TROD

MEANWHILE IN EDO, KATAGI TENEMENTS
HMM
TEACHER! WE'RE ALL GOING TO THE BATHS RIGHT NOW!
WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME AS WELL!?
YES, I'LL BE RIGHT OUT!
4 IN THE AFTERNOON

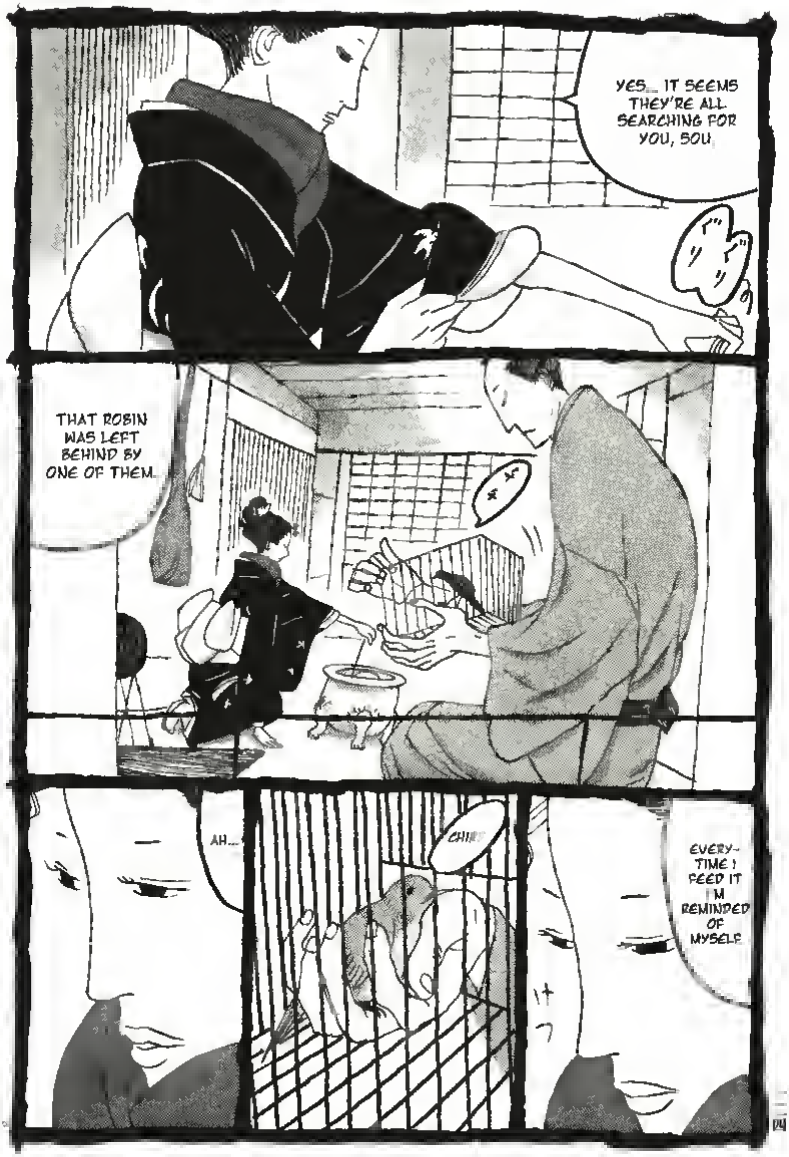
CHAPTER 37
A CAGED BIRD
CHIYO
FUJI
KATSU
あたり

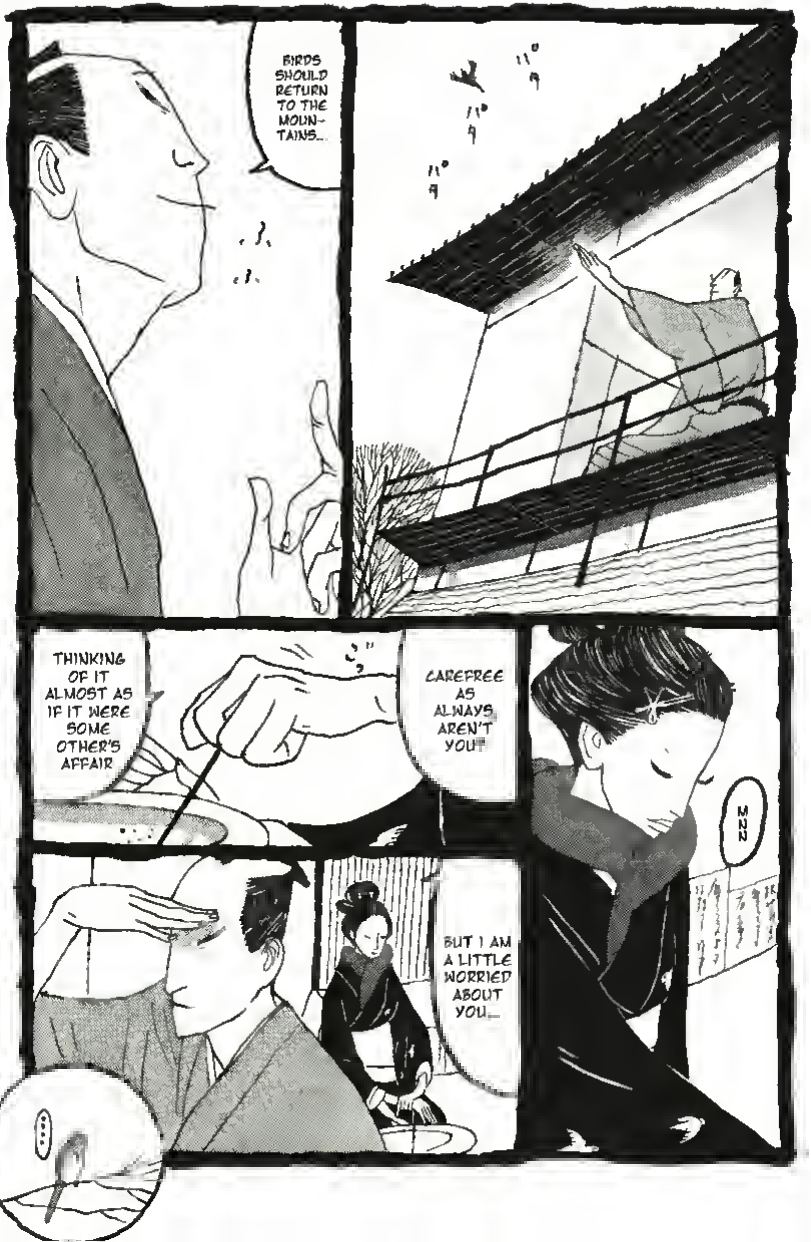
KATSU HAD COME TO BUY TEMPURA, WHEN A BLACK SHADOW APPEARED BEHIND HER.
I'LL TAKE SOME, PLEASE.
SNIFF SNIFF I SMELL SOMETHING GOOD!
I'LL DIRTY YOUR KIMONO IF YOU DON'T GIVE ME SOME!
AH, NO! DOWN DOGGIE, DOWN!
WOOF
I DIDN'T BUY THIS TO FEED YOU!
GRRRR!

OW!
ぴょん
HA HA HA
HMPH!
WELCOME BACK.

MMM,
WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
YES. THIS TEMPURA IS QUITE DELI-CIOUS.

TELL ME THE STORY ABOUT THE WATER-FALL.
WON'T YOU TELL ME ABOUT THOSE WATERS THAT CUTS ITS WAY THROUGH THE MOUNTAIN?
I'M IN A REAL BAD MOOD RIGHT NOW GO AWAY.
OH COME ON, DON'T BE SO STINGY.
I SAID SCRAM.
SAMURAIS FROM SHINANO?

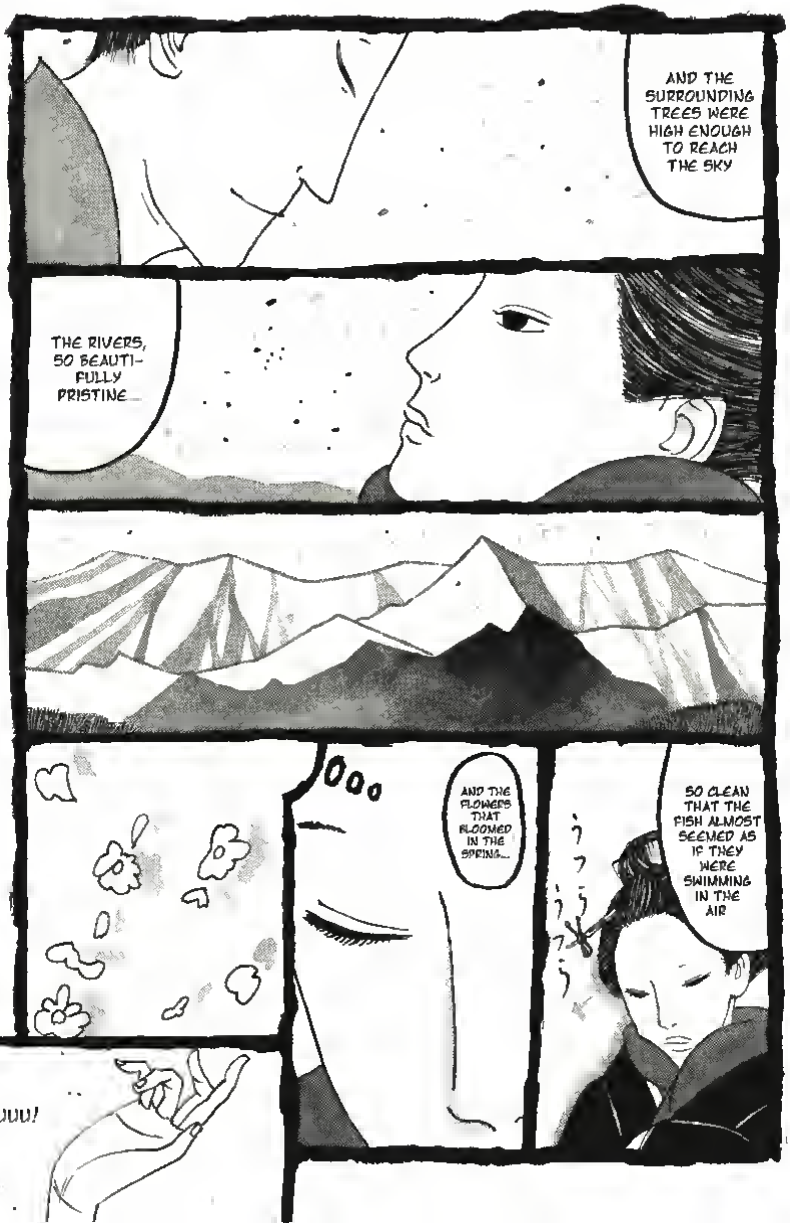

YES... IT SEEMS THEY'RE ALL SEARCHING FOR YOU, SOU.
THAT ROBIN WAS LEFT BEHIND BY ONE OF THEM.
AH...
CHI
EVERY-TIME I FEED IT I'M REMINDED OF MYSELF.


BIRDS SHOULD RETURN TO THE MOUNTAINS...
MNN
CAREFREE AS ALWAYS, AREN'T YOU?
THINKING OF IT ALMOST AS IF IT WERE SOME OTHER'S AFFAIR
BUT I AM A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT YOU...
...

STEP
STEP
MOOOOOO

SOMETIMES WHEN THEY COME, I FEEL A LITTLE DEPRESSED.
MEMORIES OF MY PARENTS WHO SOLD ME OFF MY YOUNGER BROTHER WHO STOLE POTATOES FROM THE FIELD...
I'M REMINDED OF SOME FAINT MEMORIES OF HOME.
O.....
SHUT
ACHOO!
NOT THE MOST PLEASANT MEMORIES... NOTHING BUT TROUBLES

THE COLDNESS OF SHINANO IS DIFFERENT FROM HERE, KATSU.
THE WINDS WERE SHARP ENOUGH TO CUT—
BUT I LOVED HOW IT FELT AS IF MY ENTIRE BODY WAS BEING CLEANSED AS IT BREEZED PAST ME.
THOUGH MY PARENTS DID NOT LIKE THE DEERS AND BOARS BECAUSE THEY RUINED OUR GARDEN, THOSE WILD BEASTS WERE MY ONLY FRIENDS AS A CHILD


AND THE SURROUNDING TREES WERE HIGH ENOUGH TO REACH THE SKY
THE RIVERS, SO BEAUTI-FULLY PRISTINE...
SO CLEAN THAT THE FISH ALMOST SEEMED AS IF THEY WERE SWIMMING IN THE AIR
AND THE FLOWERS THAT BLOOMED IN THE SPRING...
SOUUU!

SOUUU!
LOOK, THE TEMPURA IS ALREADY GROWING FROM THE TREE
HELLO, KATSU
MMM, IT LOOKS DELI-CIOUS

HERE'S THE ACORNS.
YES, I'D LIKE TO BUY SOME MR.RABBIT.
HAHA
I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD BE ABLE TO LIVE LIKE THIS WITH YOU, SOU
THE MOUNTAINS ARE A WONDERFUL PLACE.

IT'S JUST LIKE A DREAM.
MMM...

WHEN I AWOKE, SOU HAD ALREADY LEFT...
SLIDE
THE HOUSES OFF IN THE DISTANCE LOOKED DARKER THAN BLACK INK...
SHUT

HAVE YOU ALREADY GONE TO OUR ESTATE HERE IN EDO?
MORI SAZATAROU HAD ARRIVED AT EDO.
AH, YOU"RE HERE!
DID YOU HAVE ANY TROU-BLES DURING YOUR TRIP?
WELL THANK YOU.
AH NO NOT YET. I WANTED TO SAY HELLO TO YOU MEN FIRST.
藥種
AH, THAT'S QUITE IMPRESSIVE.
HMM?
I CAME ALONE.
NO,
DID YOU COME WITH ANYONE ELSE?

*STORE SIGN READS APOTHECARY

OH I SEE. WELL IN ANY CASE, IT IS QUITE REASSURING TO HAVE A BRAVE TALENTED MAN SUCH AS YOU HERE NOW.
AH, NO, NO DON'T MIND ME
YOU, GO AND BUY SOME SAKE FOR THE OCCASION
菜種
HMM...
YES, YES. IT'LL BE VERY REASSURING INDEED!

EVENING AT FALL
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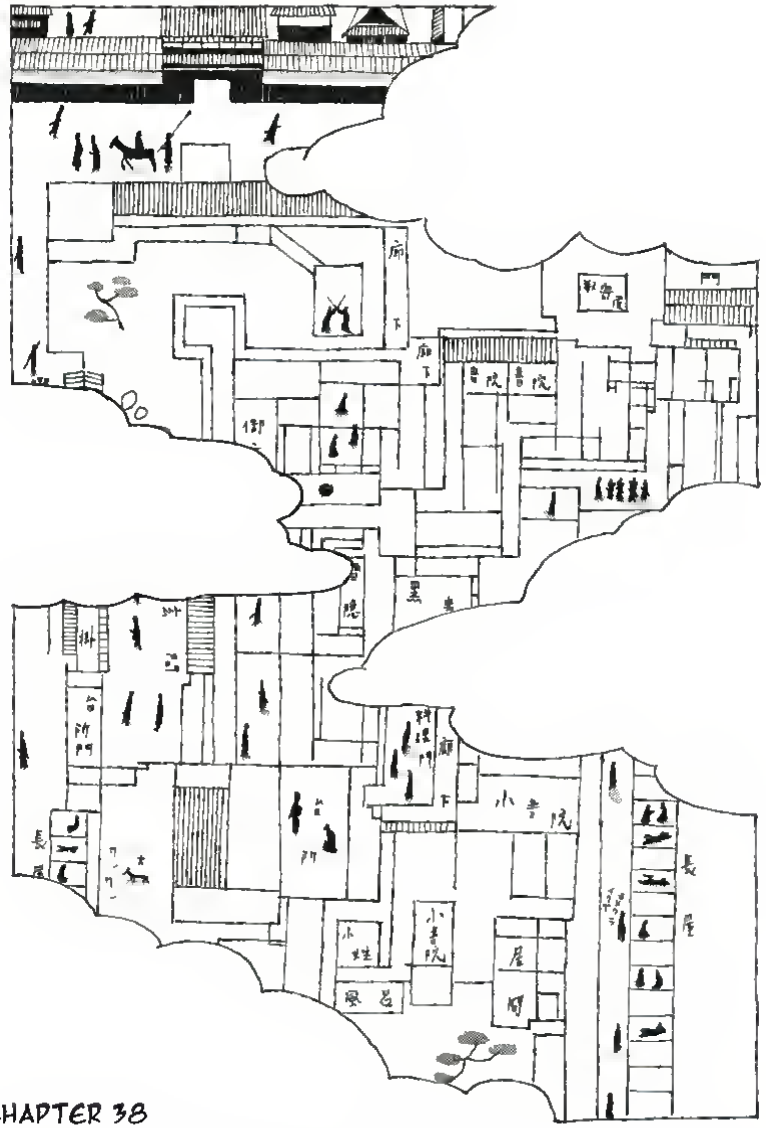
カラ



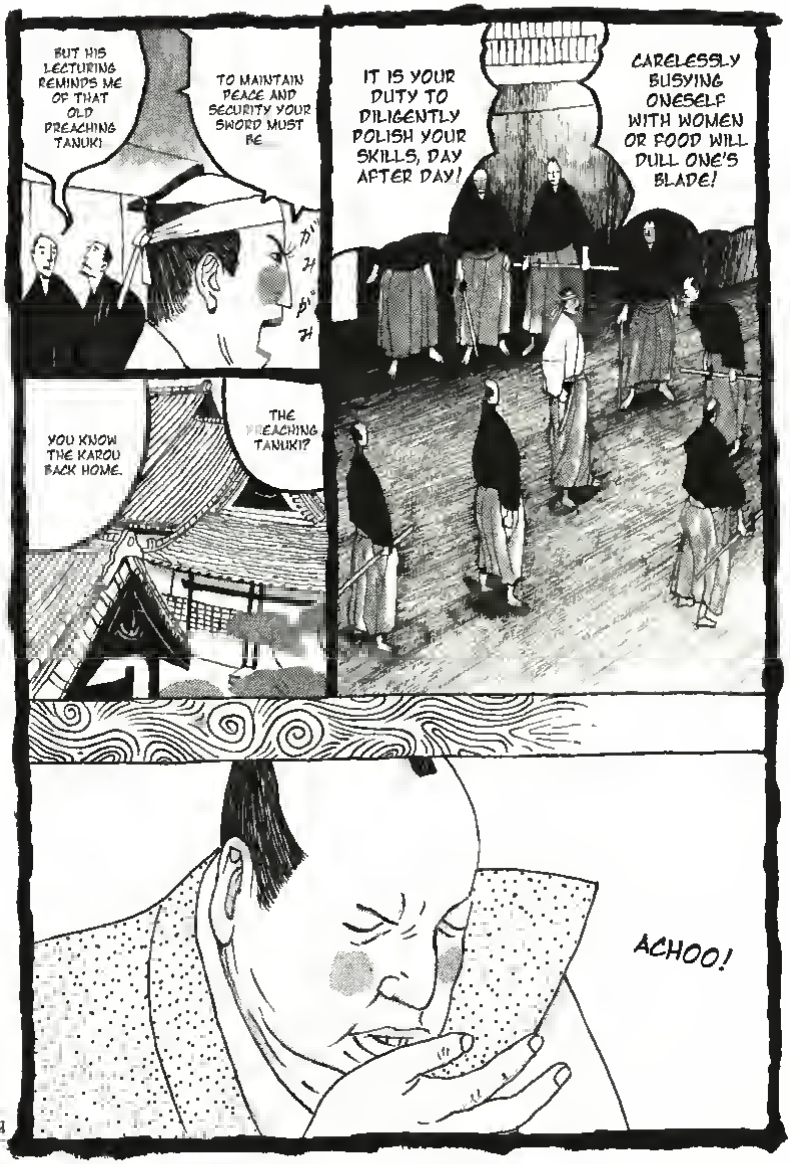
CHAPTER 38

CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR HOME

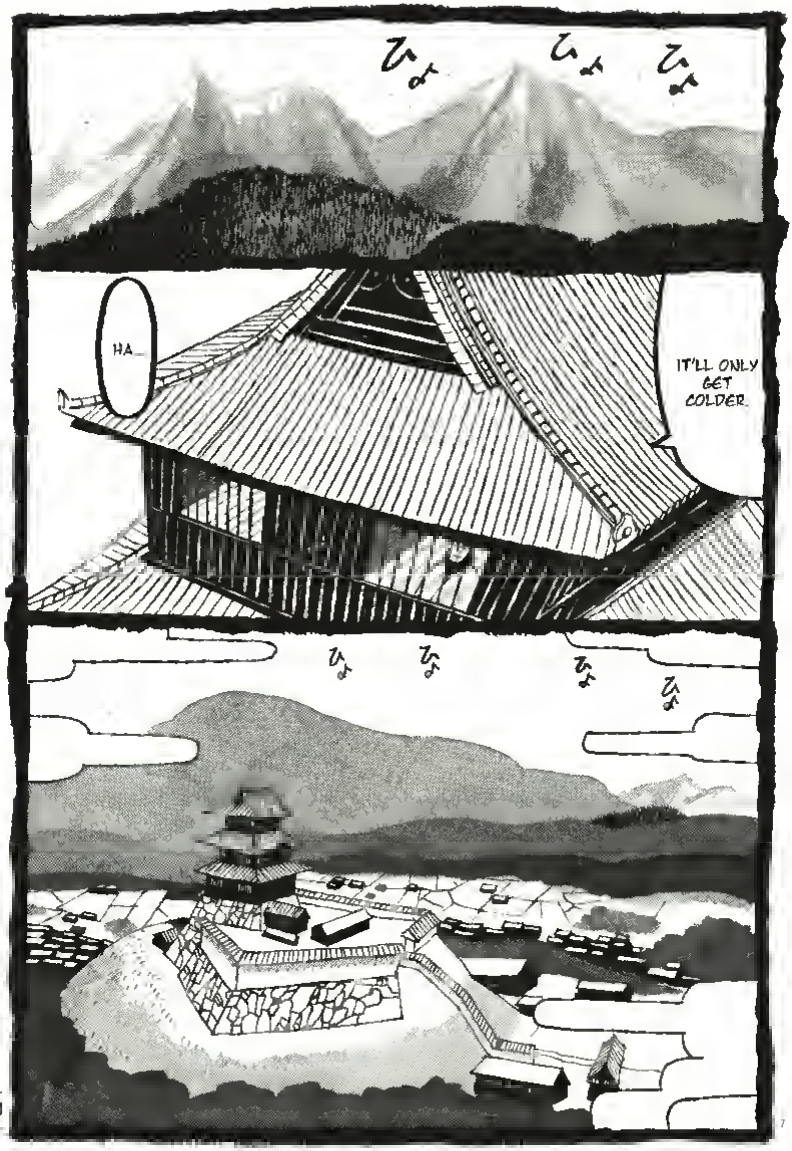
THE DOJO OF THE ESTATE IN EDO BELONGING TO THE TAKI HOUSE OF SHINANO PROVINCE...
I-1
HAH!
AHH!
YAH!
NGH!
HAH!
WHACK!
たんっ

UGH!
SMACK!
AGAIN! STAND UP!
NO! WE'RE NOT FINISHED YET!
さっ
WELL HE IS OMURASAKI'S RIGHT HAND MAN AFTER ALL.
エー
THAT MORI'S VERY STRONG.

MOST IMPRESSIVE.
BUT HE'S SPARRING AGAINST THAT YAMAMOTO AND HASN'T LOST A SINGLE POINT YET!
UGH!
YAMAMOTO, I THINK YOUR SKILLS HAVE DULLED SINCE COMING TO EDO!!!


BUT HIS LECTURING REMINDS ME OF THAT OLD PREACHING TANUKI.
TO MAINTAIN PEACE AND SECURITY YOUR SWORD MUST BE...
IT IS YOUR DUTY TO DILIGENTLY POLISH YOUR SKILLS, DAY AFTER DAY!
CARELESSLY BUSYING ONESELF WITH WOMEN OR FOOD WILL DULL ONE'S BLADE!
YOU KNOW THE KAROU BACK HOME.
THE PREACHING TANUKI?
ACHOO!

SHINANO PROVINCE, TATEISHI CASTLE TOWER
EXCUSE ME.
HMM?
YOU SHOULD KEEP WARM.
YES.
I'M AFRAID SO.
DID YOU CATCH A COLD?
IT LOOKS AS IF IT'S WEARING A GREAT WHITE HAT.
WOULD YOU TAKE A LOOK AT THAT... THOSE MOUNTAIN TOPS OVER THERE.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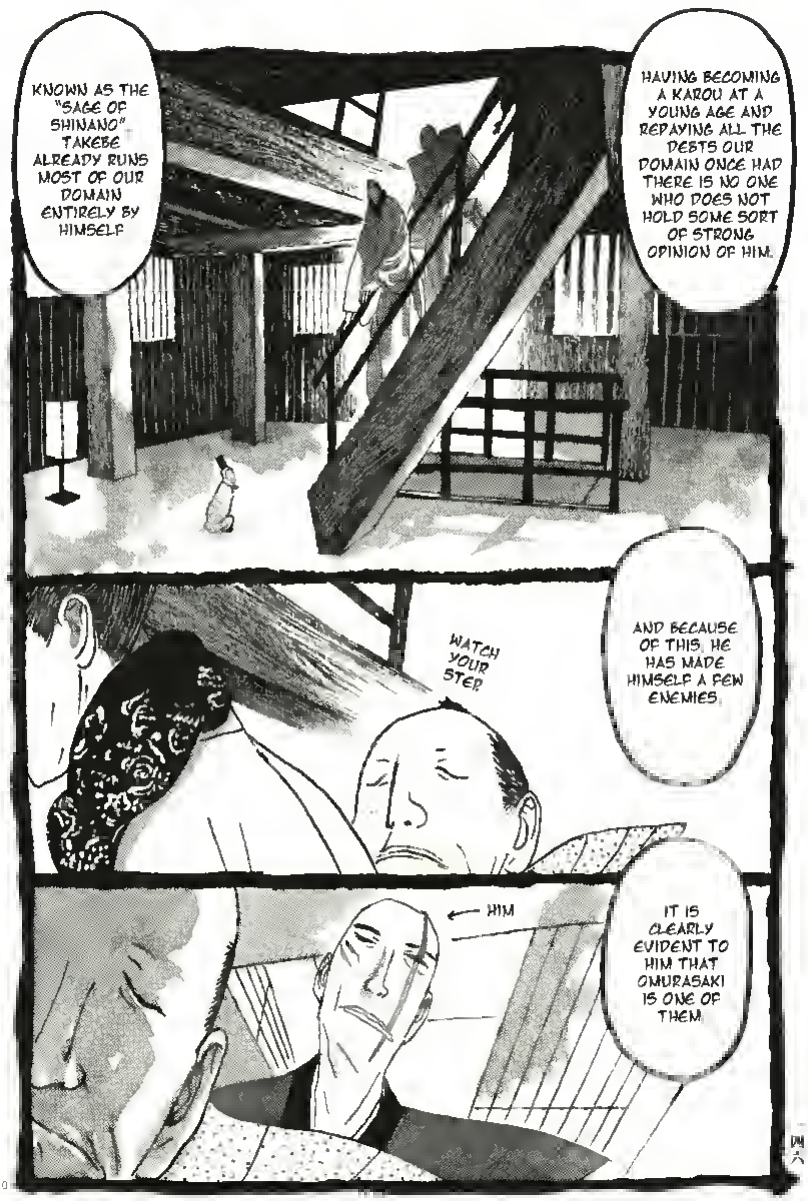
ひょ
HA...
IT'LL ONLY GET COLDER.
ひょ
ひょ
ひょ
ひょ

SO WHY IS TAKEBE SO FIXATED ON THAT FOX?
BACK TO EDO AGAIN, 2ND FLOOR OF AN APOTHECARY SHOP
SO EVEN IF TOYOMARU BECAME OUR NEXT LORD COULDN'T TAKEBE JUST AS EASILY CONTROL HIM AS WELL?
BUT ISN'T OUR LORD'S NEPHEW TOYOMARU STILL JUST A BOY, NOT EVEN 10 YEARS OF AGE?
TOYOMARU
HE'LL TURN THE FOX INTO A PUPPET RULER TO SEIZE ALL POWER
OMURASAKI SAID THAT IT WAS BECAUSE WHEN TAKEBE SEATS THAT FOX AS THE NEXT LORD OF TATEISHI,
YOU'RE MISTAKEN NISHINO
NO,

TOYOMARU'S PARENTS WILL BE SURE TO COMPLAIN ABOUT WHAT RIGHT TAKEBE HAS IN INTERFERING WITH GOVERNING WHEN HIS PARENTS CAN'T EVEN READ
TOYOMARU'S MOTHER, AKI, IS A VERY EXTRAVAGANT WOMAN WHO'LL BE SURE TO COME IN CONFLICT WITH TAKEBE'S FRUGAL NATURE
TAKEBE IS TESTING US ALL.
SLIDE
UGH YOU STINK! HAHA!
WHAT? WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY YOU LITTLE...!
SNIFF SNIFF!
H-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
HAHA THAT'S RIGHT MENTION TAKEBE'S NAME AND YOU CAN SMELL THE IDIOCY.
AH...!
AND WHO'LL RAISE THEIR SWORDS AND BE HIS FOES
TESTING TO SEE WHO'LL BE HIS ALLIES,


KNOWN AS THE "SAGE OF SHINANO", TAKEBE ALREADY RUNS MOST OF OUR DOMAIN ENTIRELY BY HIMSELF
HAVING BECOMING A KAROU AT A YOUNG AGE AND REPAYING ALL THE DEBTS OUR DOMAIN ONCE HAD THERE IS NO ONE WHO DOES NOT HOLD SOME SORT OF STRONG OPINION OF HIM.
WATCH YOUR STEP
AND BECAUSE OF THIS, HE HAS MADE HIMSELF A FEW ENEMIES.
HIM
IT IS CLEARLY EVIDENT TO HIM THAT OMURASAKI IS ONE OF THEM.

AND SO IT IS NOT JUST A SIMPLE INHERITANCE MATTER THAT IS AT HAND HIS TRUE AIM IS TO..
IS HOW MANY OTHERS ARE SECRETLY AGAINST HIM
BUT WHAT HE DOES NOT KNOW...
MNN
CAN ONE OF YOU SHOW ME WHERE THE FOX IS LIVING HERE IN EDO?
EXCUSE ME, PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BETTER IF I STOPPED SPEAKING OF SUCH MATTERS

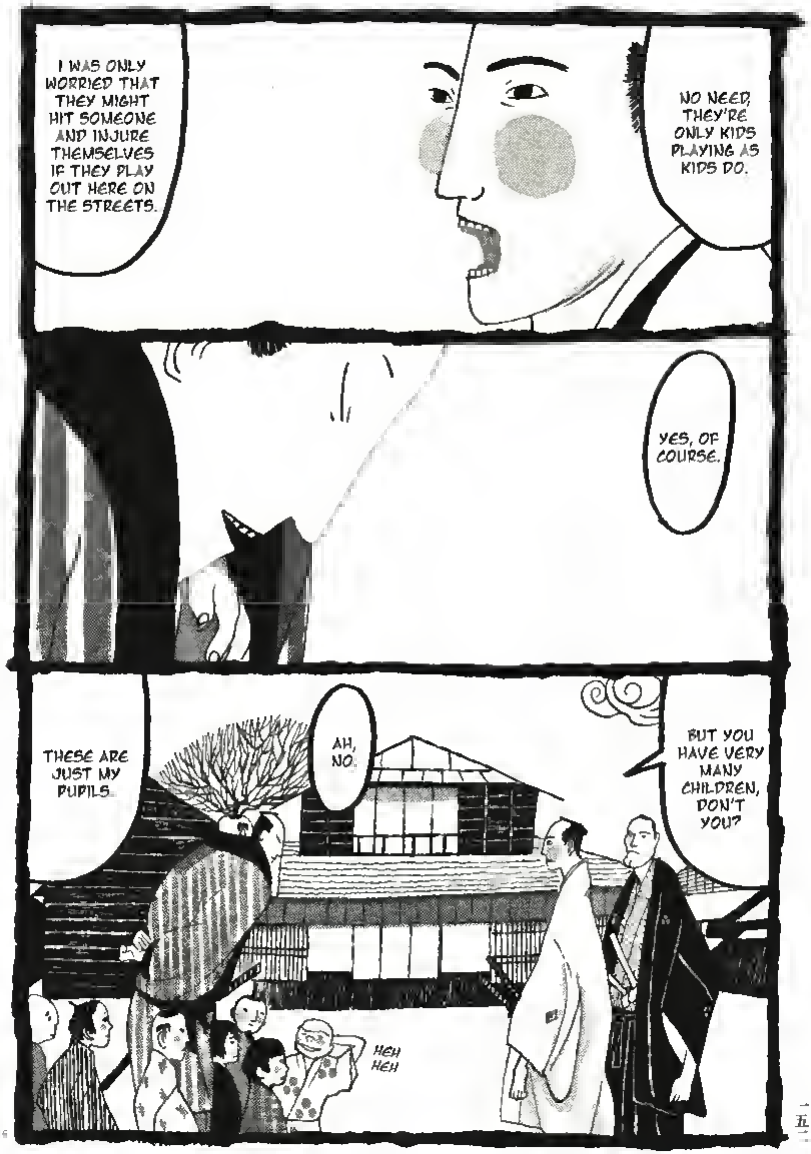
AHHH, EDO IS AS LIVELY AS EVER.
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE BEEN TO EDO WITHOUT OUR LORD...
I...
YAMA-MOTO. STRICTLY BETWEEN JUST YOU AND I
I DID NOT ACTUALLY COME HERE UNDER OMURSAKI'S ORDERS.
YES, I KNOW.

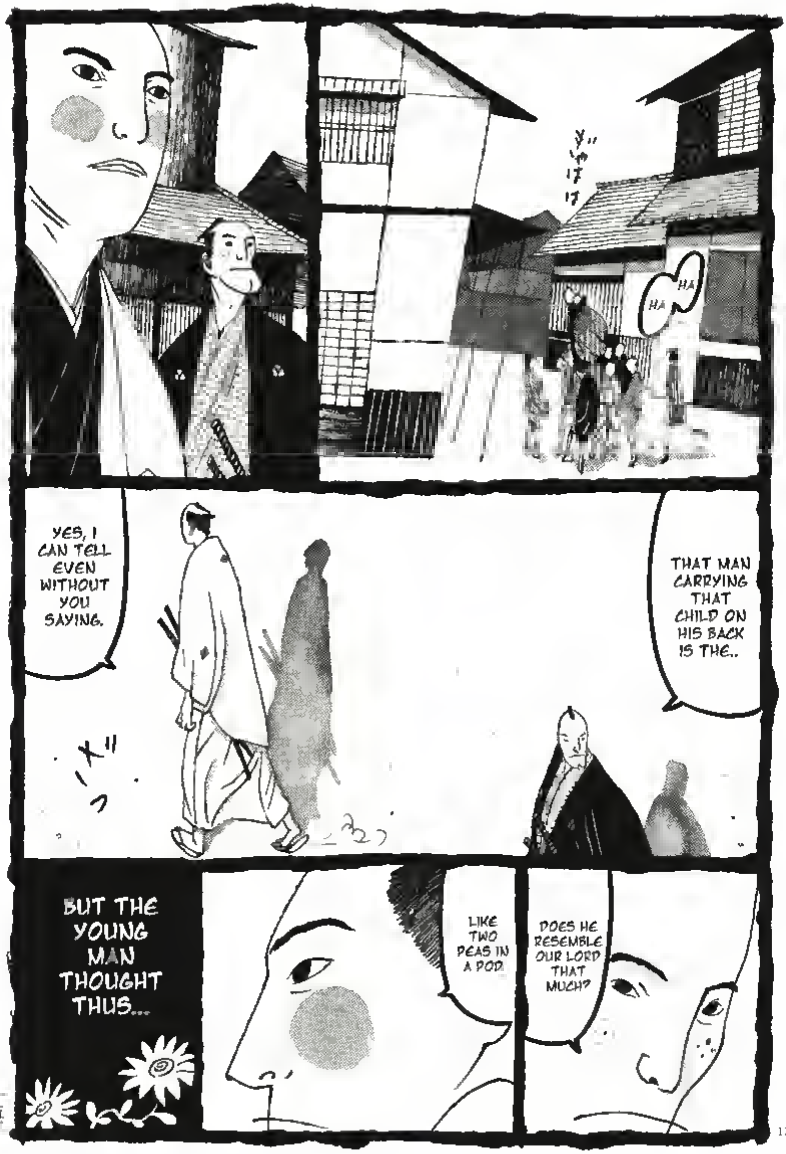
SO THAT'S HOW YOU KNEW.
I SEE.
HE HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THERE IS NO ONE OTHER THAN KIKUCHI WHO CAN CUT DOWN THAT FOX.
HMM?
AH!
SO HE REALLY SAID THAT, DID HE...
やあああ
AGH!
AH....

WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE, A CHILD?
ONE
I'M SORRY
YES, MISTER
BUT YOU MUSTN'T PLAY OUT IN THE CROWDED STREETS, YOU HEAR?
I REMEMBER PLAYING BLINDFOLDED DEMON* WHEN I WAS A CHILD AS WELL
DID HE HAPPEN TO DIRTY YOUR CLOTHES AT ALL?
FORGIVE ME, SIR.

*CHILDREN'S GAME SIMILAR TO MARCO POLO

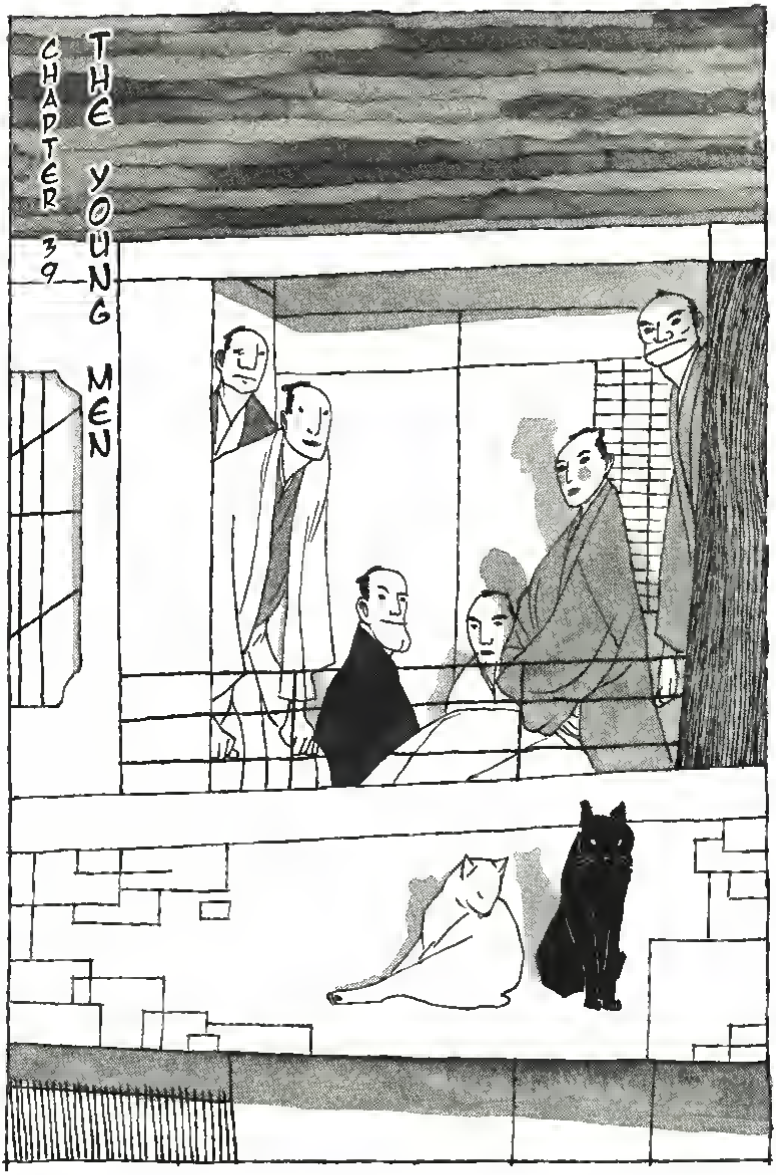
ALRIGHT, EVERBODY APOLOGIZE TO THE MAN
YOSHIROU YOU DUMMY
WE'RE SORRY MISTER.
...

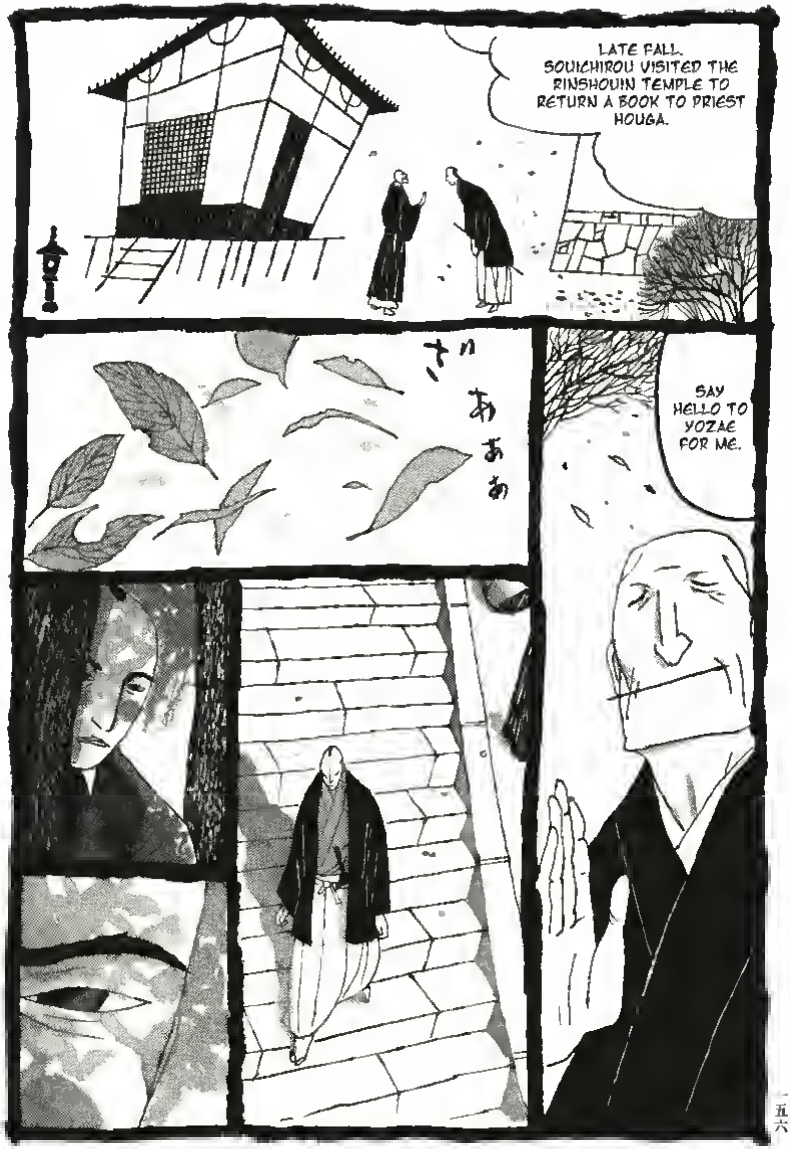

I WAS ONLY WORRIED THAT THEY MIGHT HIT SOMEONE AND INJURE THEMSELVES IF THEY PLAY OUT HERE ON THE STREETS.
NO NEED. THEY'RE ONLY KIDS PLAYING AS KIDS DO.
YES, OF COURSE.
THESE ARE JUST MY PUPILS.
AH, NO.
BUT YOU HAVE VERY MANY CHILDREN, DON'T YOU?
HEH HEH


HA
HA
THAT MAN CARRYING THAT CHILD ON HIS BACK IS THE..
YES, I CAN TELL EVEN WITHOUT YOU SAYING.
DOES HE RESEMBLE OUR LORD THAT MUCH?
LIKE TWO PEAS IN A POD.
BUT THE YOUNG MAN THOUGHT THUS...

I HAD EXPECTED HIM TO LOOK MUCH MORE INTIMIDAT-ING...
BUT THIS IS SUR-PRIS-INGLY...
TO CUT HIM DOWN MIGHT BE EASY.
THAT WAS WHAT MORI BELIEVED.

CHAPTER 39 THE YOUNG MEN




LATE FALL.
SOUICHIROU VISITED THE RINSHOUIN TEMPLE TO RETURN A BOOK TO PRIEST HOUGA.
さぁあぁあ
SAY HELLO TO YOZAE FOR ME.

GRIP
ハッ
あ
あ
あ

I'D RATHER YOU NOT PULL OUT YOUR SWORD HERE
THIS IS THE TEMPLE OF A PRIEST I'M INDEBTED TO,
SO I DO NOT WISH TO SEE IT TAINTED BY BLOOD
STEP

ALRIGHT, SIR.
I'LL TAKE 4 STICKS, PLEASE
!
TAP
HAHA
STEP
ALLOW ME TO PAY FOR THAT!!!

THIS IS CERTAINLY DIFFERENT FROM HOW YOU USUALLY ONLY TAIL AFTER ME.
ARE THE MOUN-TAINS OF SHINANO COVERED IN SNOW YET?
HOW DID YOU KNOW I'M FROM SHIN...
AH, NO THANK YOU..
h
!
I SAW YOU THE OTHER DAY WITH THAT BIG-CHINNED FELLOW ! CAN SEE THAT YOU ARE NO ORDINARY SWORDS-MAN. I WOULD OF COURSE BE NO MATCH FOR YOU. HAHA...
(.....)

FIGHT WITH ME!!!
AHAHAHA!
I DO NOT WISH TO DIE SO SOON.
WILL YOU ACCEPT?
NO, I DECLINE.
AS I THOUGHT ...

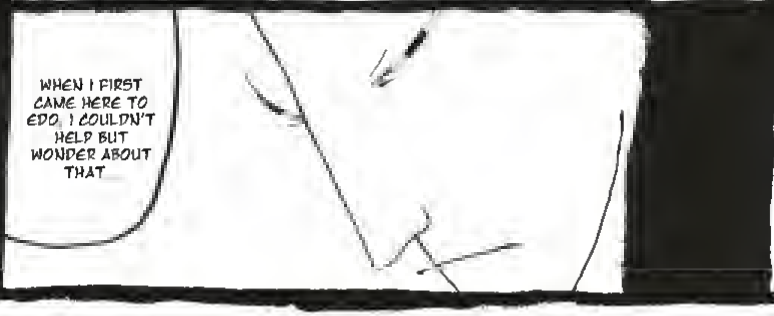
I'D MUCH RATHER PEACEFULLY GAZE AT THE SCENERY FOR NOW.
HA HA HA
あはは

HMM?
WHERE'S MORI?
HE WENT TO GO HUNT THE FOX
ALONE?
WELL, WE OBVIOUSLY OFFERED TO GO WITH HIM.
BUT HE SAID THAT HE DIDN'T NEED ANY MORE MIND-RANGES
HE LOOKS DOWN ON US AS IF WE WERE DOGS...
HE THINKS TOO HIGHLY OF HIMSELF FOR A MERE ATTENDANT.

EAGER, AIN'T HE?
HMPH,
I COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT WHETHER THE FOX OR THE NEPHEW IS CHOSEN AS THE NEXT LORD
POLITICS AND ALL THAT REALLY DON'T CONCERN US.
THE ONLY THING I'M THINKING ABOUT IS HOW HUNGRY I AM RIGHT NOW
米種

THE FISH OF THIS RESTAURANT IS QUITE DELICIOUS
YOU EAT QUITE A LOT DON'T YOU..
HERE
AH NO... I DON'T DDRINK.
I'VE REDISCOVERED HOW GOOD SAKE CAN BE SINCE COMING TO EDO
HA HA

IF MY LATE FATHER KNEW, I'M SURE HE'D GIVE ME A HARSH SCOLDING
IT'S UNCANNY.
HOW SIMILAR HE IS TO MY LORD
HE WAS A MAN WHO BELIEVED IN THE POWER OF THE SWORD ABOVE ALL.
EVEN BEING KILLED BY THE SWORD MAY HAVE BEEN HIS SECRET DESIRE

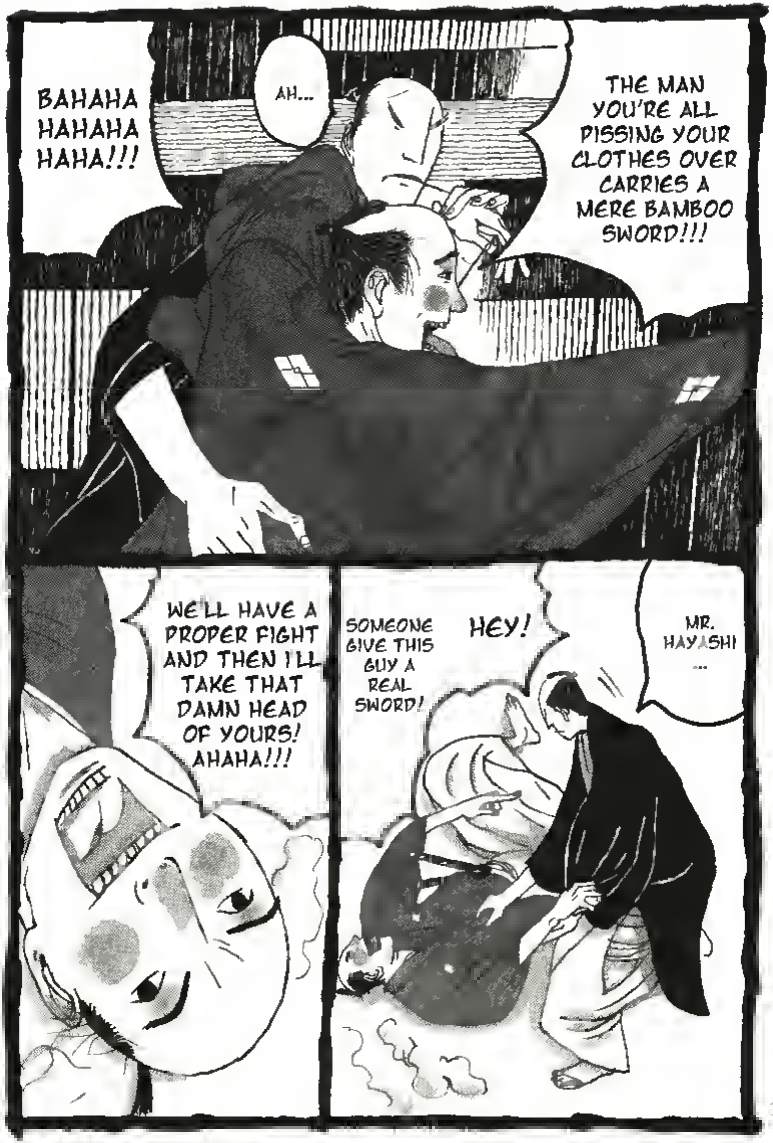

WHEN I FIRST CAME HERE TO EDO, I COULDN'T HELP BUT WONDER ABOUT THAT

I WONDERED TIME AND TIME AGAIN WHY HE ENDED UP SUFFERING THE FATE HE DID...
...HM?
DOES HE REALLY NOT KNOW ANY-THING...?
BUT THINGS ARE DIF-FERENT THESE DAYS
.....
WOULD YOU MIND TELLING ME YOUR NAME?
A-AH, THAT'S RIGHT...
IT'S UH... HAYASHI
MY MIND IS NOT OCCUPIED BY SUCH MATTERS THESE DAYS, MR. HAYASHI.
WELL TO BE PRECISE, I TRY VERY HARD NOT TO THINK OF IT ANYMORE.

BECAUSE IF I DO KEEP THINKING ABOUT IT, I FEEL THAT MY NEW LIFESTYLE AND FRIENDS WILL ALL DISAPPEAR
STORE-KEEP, DO YOU HAVE ANY KYOTO SAKE?
WELL,
WE HAVE KENBI-SHI...
GOOD HEAT SOME KENBISHI SAKE THEN, PLEASE.
YES, SIR.
ちょん。

NO, LET'S WAIT JUST A LITTLE LONGER.
CAN'T WE RETURN [redacted] ALREADY?
YES. THAT'S RIGHT. WE'RE ALREADY SUSPICIOUS ENOUGH JUST STANDING LIKE THIS.
BUT WE'LL RAISE SUSPICIONS IF WE STAY OUT HERE ANY LONGER.
HEY, OVER THERE!!
オオーン
オン
オン
AHAHAHA! AHH...

HAHA, GOOD BOY, GOOD BOY! GAHAHAHA!
HAVE YOU GUYS BEEN WAITING FOR ME LIKE DOGS AWAITING THEIR MASTERS AT HOME!?
HEY, CHECK OUT THIS GUY'S SWORD!!
I'M AFRAID MR HAYASHI HAS DRUNK A LITTLE TOO MUCH THIS EVENING
IT'S A BAMBOO SWORD!


BAHAHA HAHAHA HAHA!!!
AH...
THE MAN YOU'RE ALL PISSING YOUR CLOTHES OVER CARRIES A MERE BAMBOO SWORD!!!
WE'LL HAVE A PROPER FIGHT AND THEN I'LL TAKE THAT DAMN HEAD OF YOURS! AHAHA!!!
SOMEONE GIVE THIS GUY A REAL SWORD!
HEY!
MR. HAYASHI ...

YOU DAMN FOX!
HEY!
WHA!
WELL, EXCUSE ME THEN. I'LL TAKE MY LEAVE...
AHHH!
M-MORI, YOUR VOICE IS TOO L...
DON'T YOU DARE RUN AWAY FROM ME! I SAID FIGHT ME YOU DAMN YELLOW BELLIED...
WOAHH!
ひゅ〜っ ひゅ〜っ
WATCH OUT!
WHAT THE HELL?

BACK IN MORI SAZATAROU'S HOMETOWN, THERE WASN'T A SINGLE PERSON WHO DID NOT KNOW WHAT HE WAS LIKE WHEN HE WAS DRUNK
AH, HE FELL ASLEEP..
DON'T BE STUPID! CARRY HIM BACK TO OUR PLACE!
WELL, HE'LL WAKE UP IN THE MORNING IF WE LEAVE HIM HERE.
HE'S OUT COLD WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
SEEZ..
THAT NIGHT YAMAMOTO HANSUKE TOOK A LIKING TO THIS YOUNG ATTENDANT FROM SHINANO

CHAPTER 40

GLASS EYED TETSUZOU

THE KODENMACHOU JAIL WAS IN A BUSTLE
THAT GLASS EYED TETSUZOU'S HERE
HUH, WHERE, WHERE?
I CAN'T SEE!
HE'S HUGE...
すんっ
MAYBE 6 SHAKU TALL..

WE GOT A NEW PRISONER. HIS NAME IS TETSUZOU AND HE'S 26 YEARS OLD
カ!
たん

*THE LITERAL TERM USED HERE IS "TSURU" AND IT REFERS TO THE MONEY OR VALUABLES A PRISONER TOOK WITH HIM INTO PRISON BACK DURING EDO PERIOD I'M NOT TOO KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE EXACT REASON WHY BUT NOT HAVING ANY TSURU MEANT THAT YOU WOULD BE HATED BY THE OTHER PRISONERS WHO MIGHT END UP KILLING YOU IN PRISON.

HMM?
THERE'S SUNLIGHT OVER THERE.
I LIKE THAT SPOT.
I DON'T LIKE THE DARK...
すん
すん
YOU CAN CATCH THE RAINDROPS THERE WHEN IT RAINS.
MNN...
MOVE IT, YOU LITTLE SHIT!

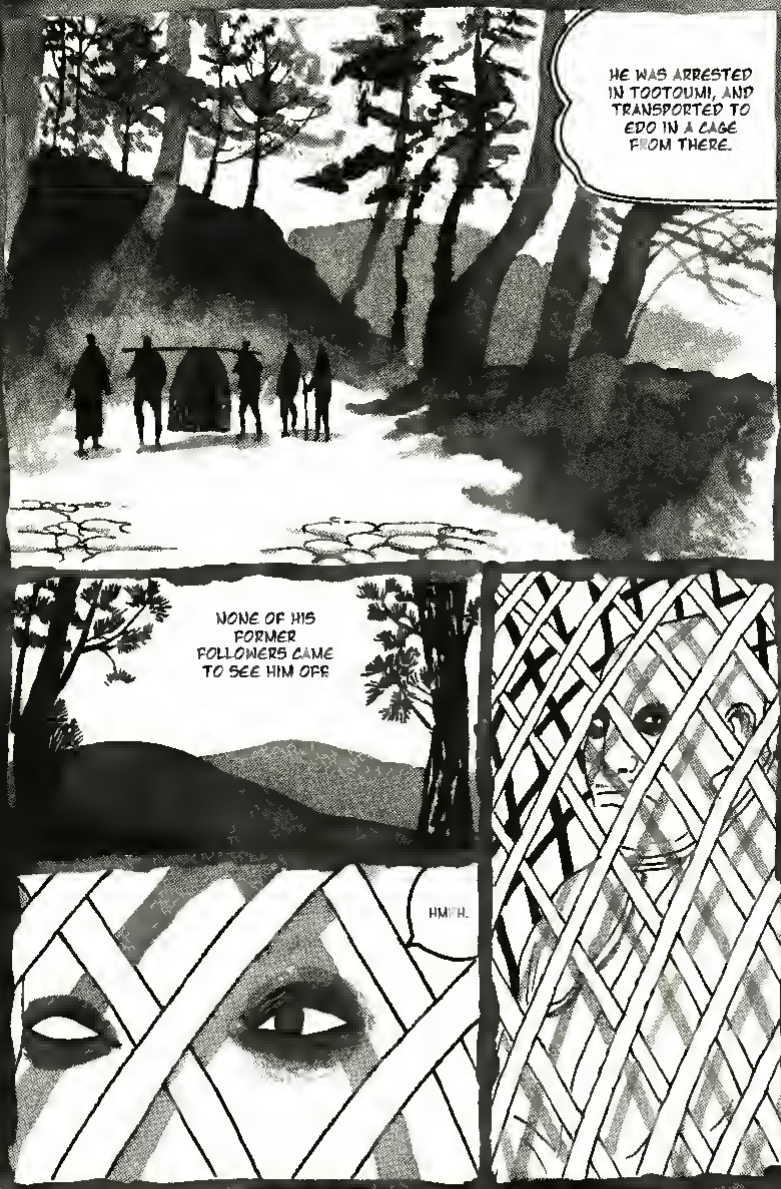
MOVE IT, THIS IS MY SPOT NOW!!
HIS NAME WAS TETSUZOU.
HE WAS BORN IN IZU PROVINCE TO A FAMILY OF SHIPWRIGHTS
YES, YES
MAMA
HE HAD 5 OLDER SISTERS AND AS THE YOUNGEST CHILD OF HIS FAMILY HE WAS DOTED UPON VERY MUCH SO...
YES DEAR.
MAMA

BUT BEFORE HE REACHED THE AGE OF 13, HE BEGAN TO ASSOCIATE HIMSELF WITH THE TROUBLEMAKERS OF HIS TOWN AND BUSIED HIMSELF WITH GAMBLING AND STEALING
HIS FAMILY FEARING HIM DISINHERITED HIM AT THE AGE OF 16
HMPH
HIS VICES GREW WORSE BY DAY TO INCLUDE EVEN RAPE

PERHAPS HE HAD THE NATURAL TALENT FOR IT BUT FOR 2 YEARS AFTER, HE WAS THE BOSS OF 50 BANDITS
DURING THIS TIME, HE STILL HAD HIS RIGHT EYE
HE LOST HIS EYE WHEN HE TRIED TO ROB A CERTAIN MERCHANT IN SUNPU
AND HE WAS AMBUSHED BY THE POLICE
WHILE TRYING TO ESCAPE, HIS EYE WAS CAUGHT BY THE SASUMATA*
AGHHH!
IT WAS THE SUMMER OF TETSUZOU'S 20TH YEAR
*TWO PRONGED MANCATCHING WEAPON

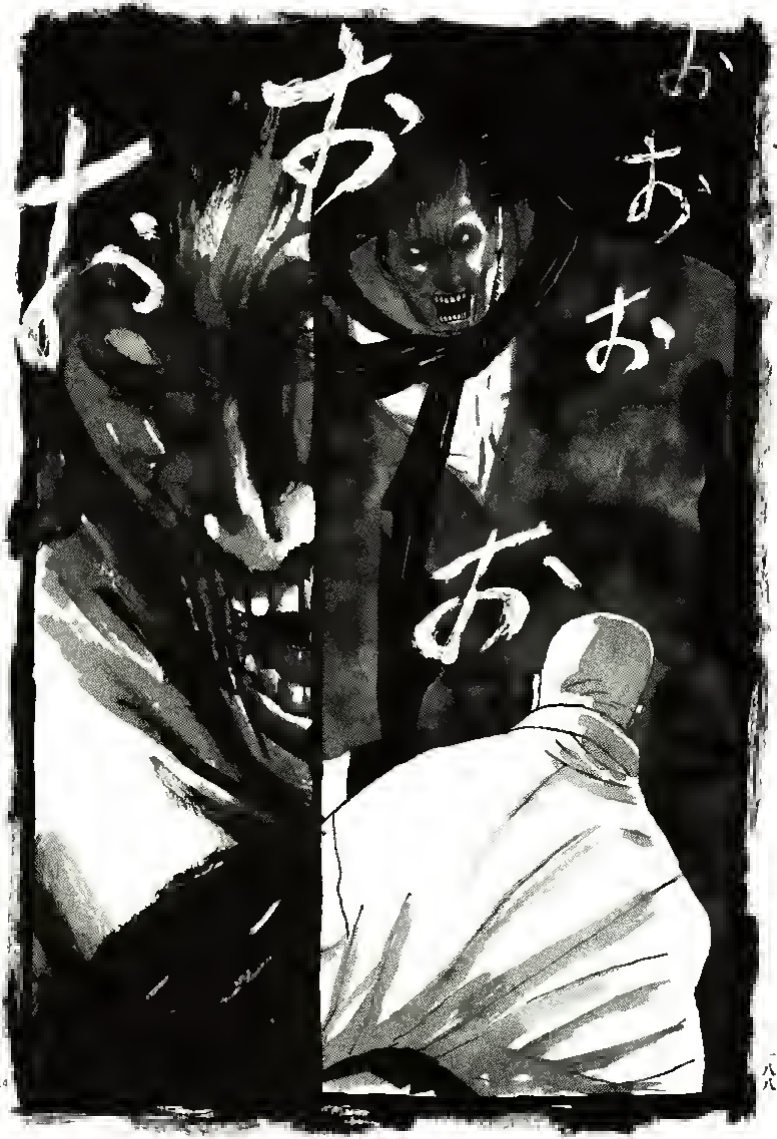
HE WAS LATER EVEN LIONIZED BY THE PEOPLE WHEN A RUMOUR SPREAD AROUND SAYING HOW HE WAS ACTUALLY A CHIVALROUS THIEF WHO ROBBED TO HELP THE POOR
AFTER THAT INCIDENT HE EARNED THE NICKNAME OF "GLASS EYED TETSUZOU"
IT WAS AROUND THIS TIME THE BAKUFU SHOGUNATE DECIDED TO TAKE ACTION
THE STORY BEHIND HIS ARREST WAS MUCH MORE ANTICLIMACTIC THAN WHAT ONE MAY HAVE THOUGHT

ONE OF TETSUZOU'S HENCHMEN NAMED RINEI BETRAYED HIM BY TELLING THE LOCAL MAGISTRATE THE ADDRESS FOR THE HOME OF ONE OF TETSUZOU'S WOMEN THAT HE STAYED AT.
AMBUSHED IN HIS SLEEP TETSUZOU WAS UNABLE TO PUT UP ANY RESISTANCE AND EASILY ARRESTED
FALL OF HIS 26TH YEAR


HE WAS ARRESTED IN TOOTOUMI, AND TRANSPORTED TO EDO IN A CAGE FROM THERE.
NONE OF HIS FORMER FOLLOWERS CAME TO SEE HIM OFF
HMPH.

HE'S HUGE
MAYBE SHAKU TALL...
THAT GLASS EYED TETSU SOU'S HERE
ZZZ
MOVE IT, THIS IS MY SPOT NOW!!!

GRRRR...
GGGRRR...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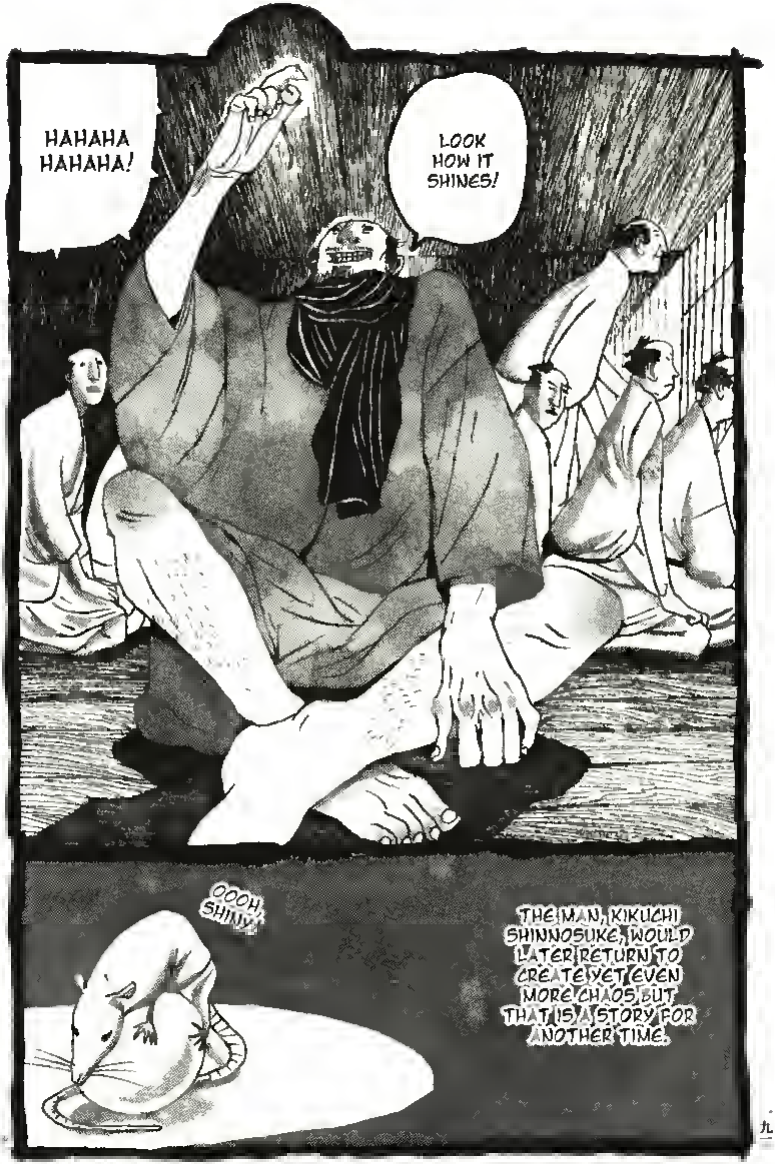
MOMMY...
YES, DEAR.

THE NEXT MORNING, THE JAIL GUARDS FOUND TO THEIR SURPRISE, THE CORPSE OF TETUZOU WITH HIS HEAD TWISTED ALL THE WAY TO HIS BACK.
HMM...

IT PROVED TO BE QUITE DIFFICULT TO MOVE TETSUZOU'S RATHER HEAVY CORPSE.
ふぅ～ふぅ
HEY, YOU GUYS GIVE US A HAND TOO!
HEE HEE
HEH HEH
ROLL...
BEAUTIFUL, AIN'T IT MESHI?


HAHAHA HAHAHA!
LOOK HOW IT SHINES!
OOOH, SHINY.
THE MAN, KIKUCHI SHINNOSUKE, WOULD LATER RETURN TO CREATE YET EVEN MORE CHAOS, BUT THAT IS A STORY FOR ANOTHER TIME.

TRANSLATED BY HOX

第五集へつづく……

待つべし、待つべし。

BIG SPIRITS COMICS SPECIAL

竹光侍 四

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著者　松本大洋 ©Matsumoto Taiyou 2008
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